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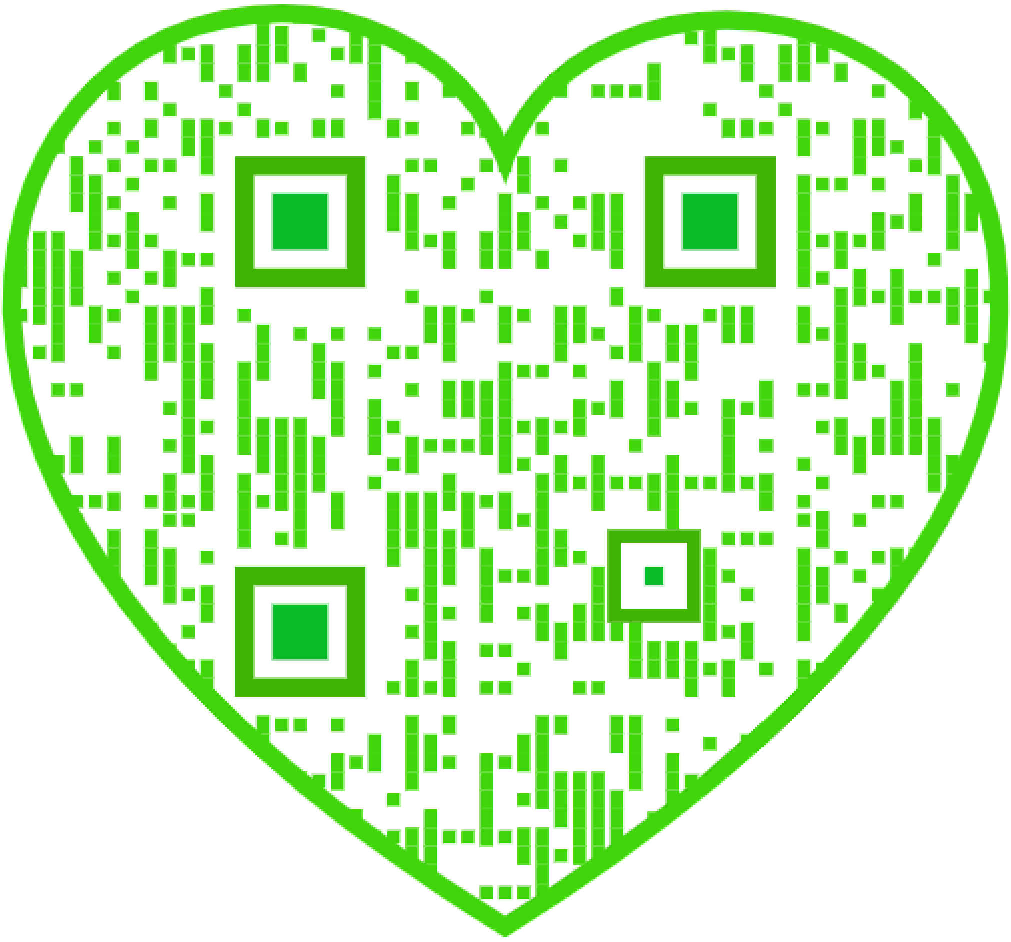

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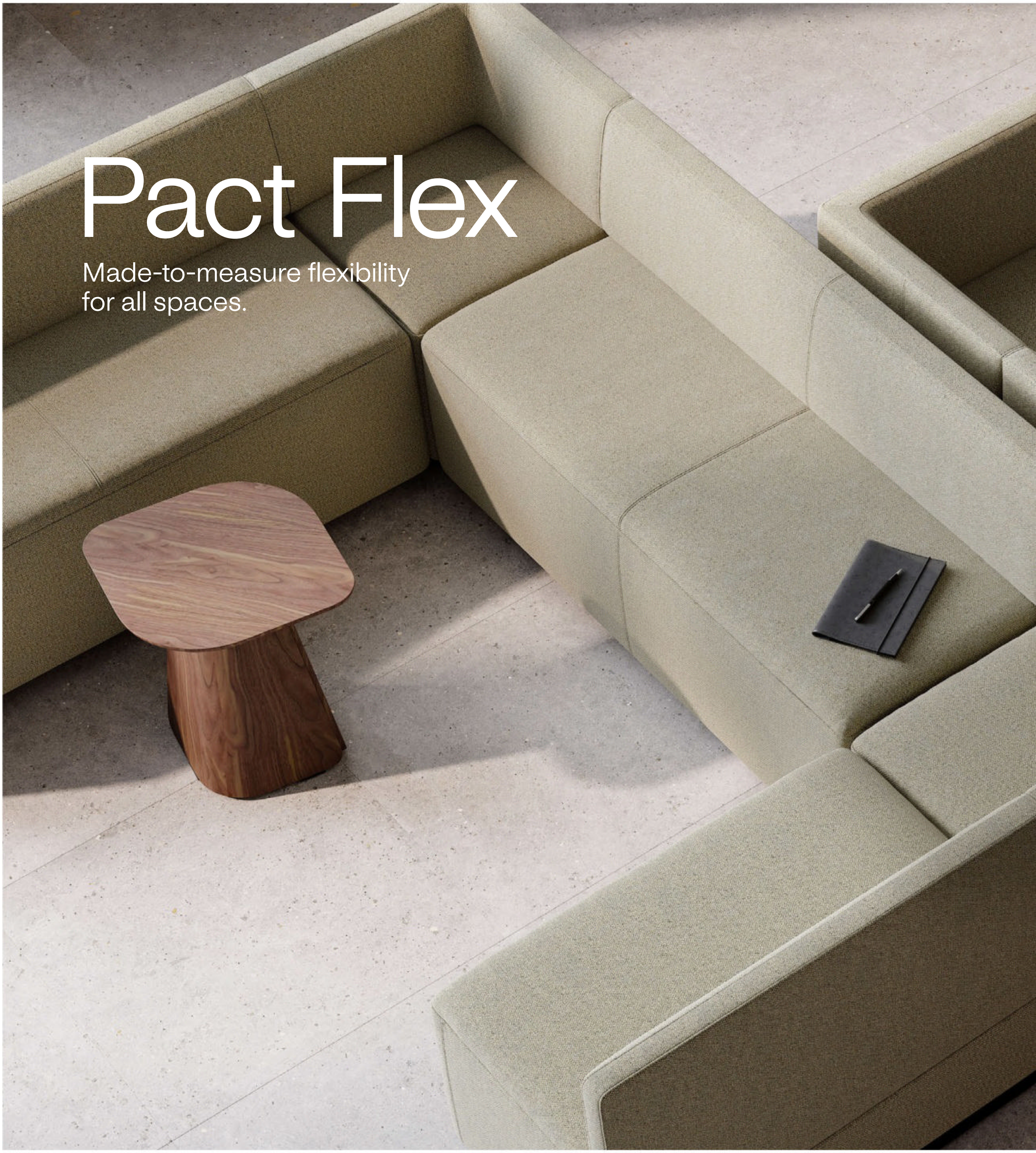

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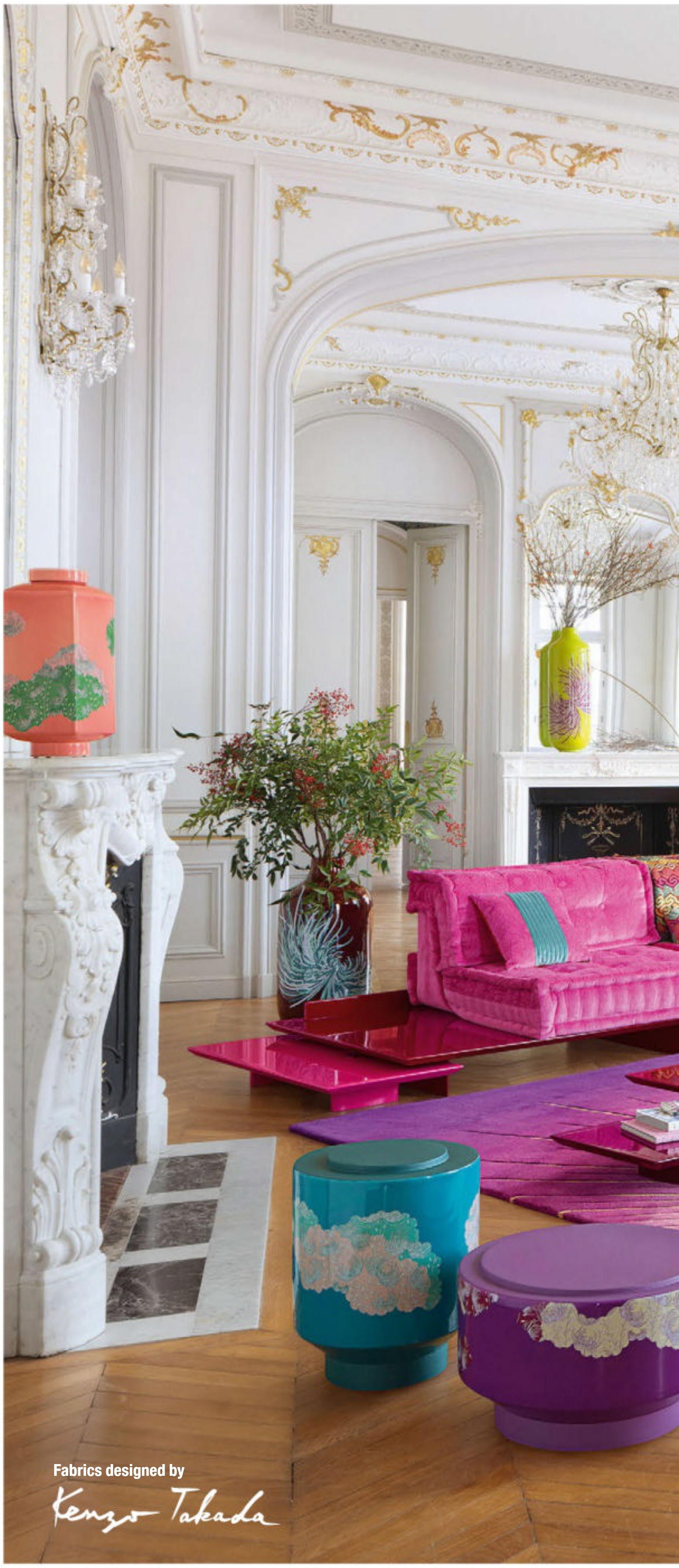

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Michael Bennett runs Studio Kër, where he trains a design lens on the African diaspora.

ON THE COVER: An anti-seismic affordable housing prototype developed by a team including architect Aziza Chaouni was erected in the Moroccan village of Talaat N'Yacoub.

PHOTO BY MARK KUSHIMI

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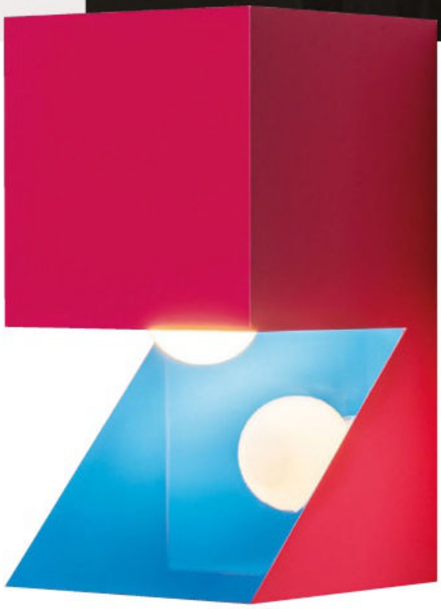

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PHOTO BY NAHO KUBOTA (FLY ME TO THE MOON)

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From the Editor

Agents of Change

"I'm really focused on trying to bring design and all that it has to offer into the spaces I grew up in, so that people have a better sense of what they can be," says Michael Bennett, who runs Studio Kër in Hawaii. His furniture, which draws inspiration from the African diaspora and goes hand in hand with his philanthropic work, embodies an original design language. Our conversation with Bennett ("Moving the Goalpost," page 46) is one of five with global practitioners who are using design to create positive impact in the places where they work and live.

The notion that design can be a conduit for social change is not new. But to truly make a difference, it needs to form meaningful dialogue — and to be directly intertwined — with communities. This idea also drives the work of Berlin studio Bplus.xyz, which formed a democratic campaign around advancing an EU law to make adaptive re-use the default for buildings that face demolition ("Protective Measures," page 63). While the movement is bolstered by the firm's imaginative architecture — from the so-called Antivilla to its own offices in what the architects have dubbed San Gimignano Lichtenberg — the true innovation at the heart of its project is the "advent of an idea into the language."

And that same spirit is at the core of a new program run out of Toronto's University Health Network. Under the rubric of "social medicine," it is prescribing shelter as a public health measure to treat the chronically unhoused. The main innovator here is a doctor: Andrew Boozary, who runs the Gattuso Centre for Social Medicine. He is working in tandem with architects at home and around the world to envision housing connected to the health system as an alternative model for a permanent solution ("Doctor's Orders," page 50).

In addition to our five conversations with community changemakers, we also spend time in Iqaluit, where a modern generation of architecture is showing that it's possible to craft places in the Canadian Arctic that embrace and celebrate the local context rather than discounting it ("Designing North," page 70).

Finally, this issue also serves up many feasts for the eyes, among them an overview of the best from Design Miami, a selection of tableware that's as sumptuous as any meal, and a multi-generational residence that revels in the details.

Elizabeth Pagliacolo, Editor

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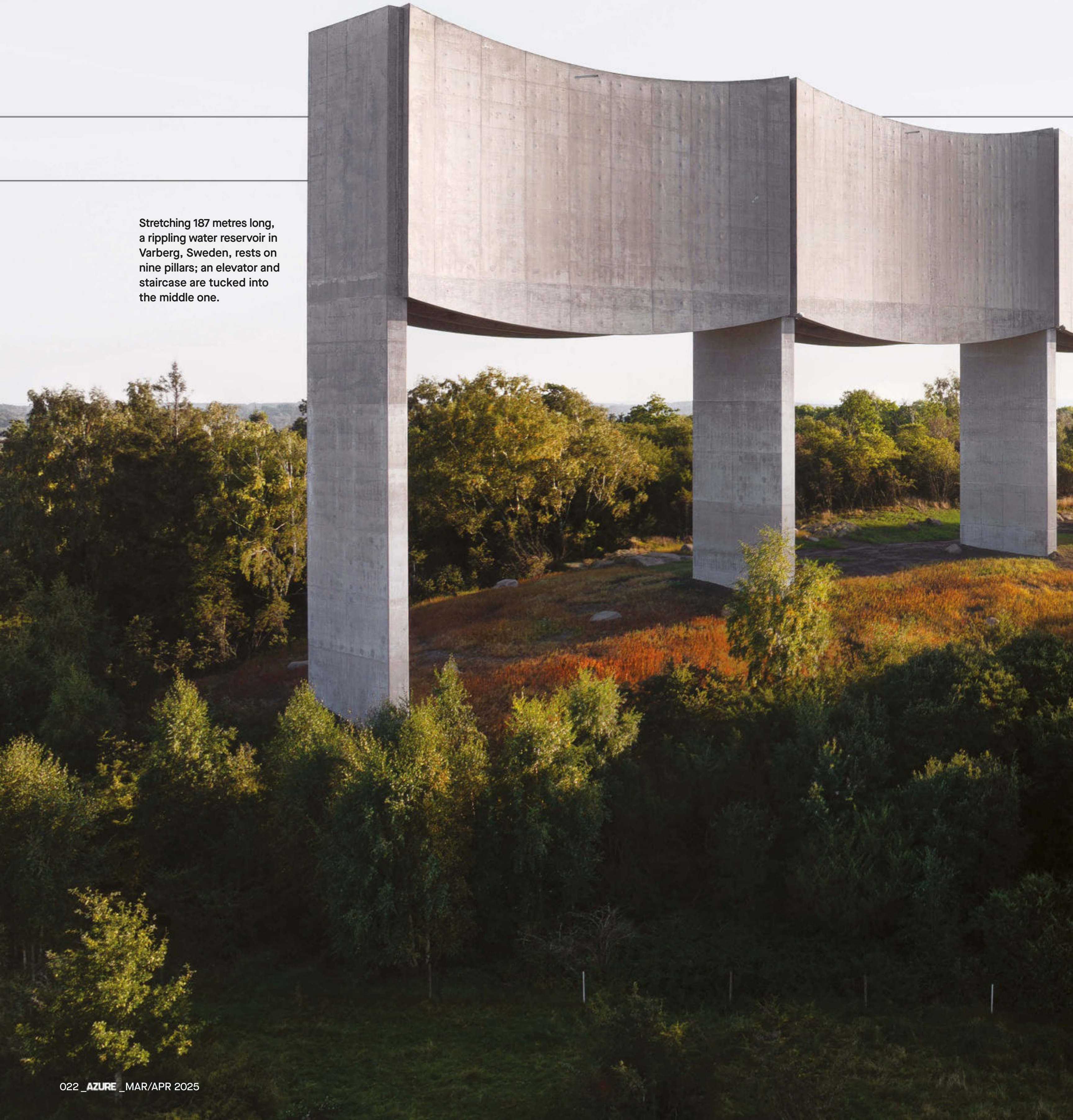

Stretching 187 metres long, a rippling water reservoir in Varberg, Sweden, rests on nine pillars; an elevator and staircase are tucked into the middle one.

First + Foremost

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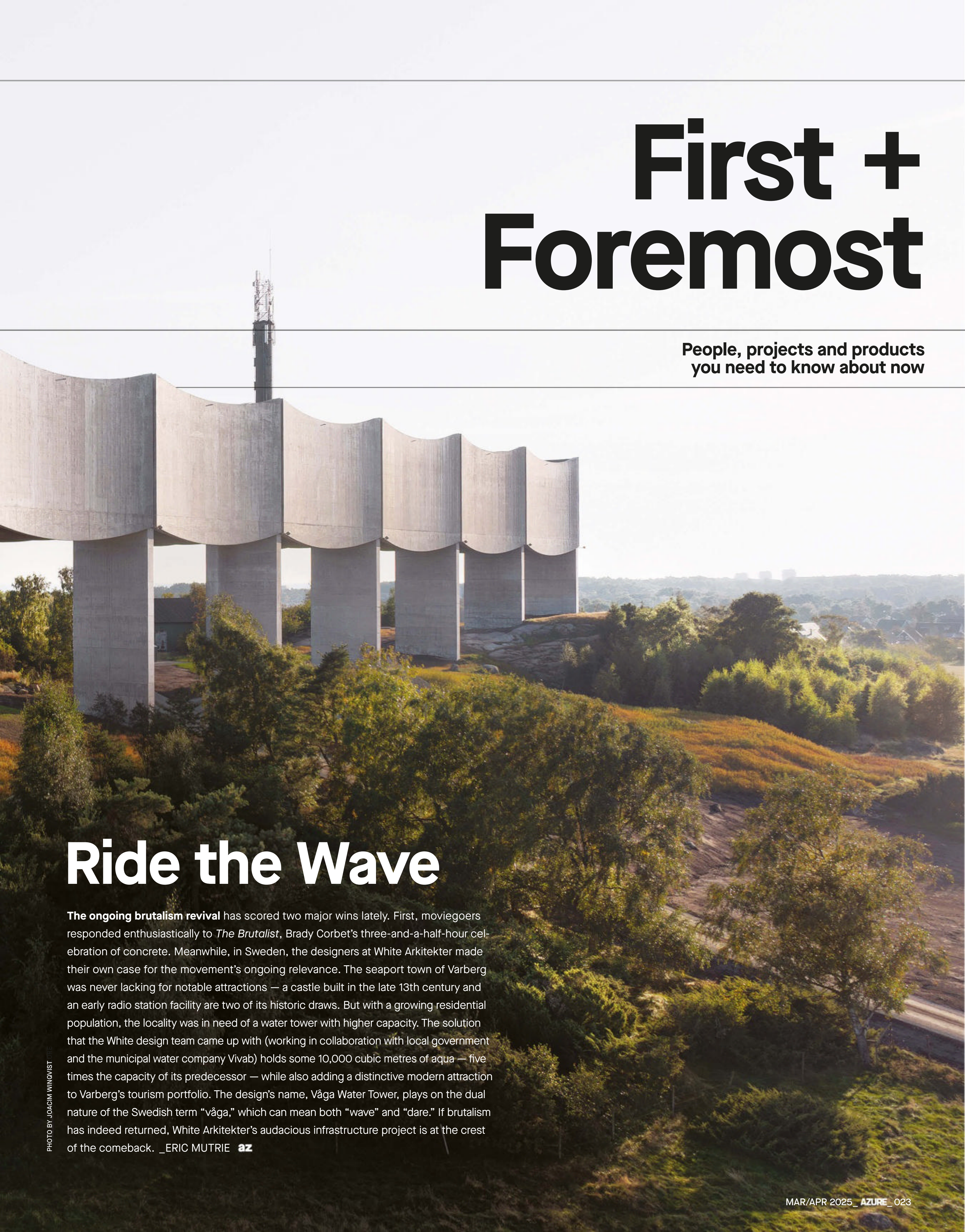
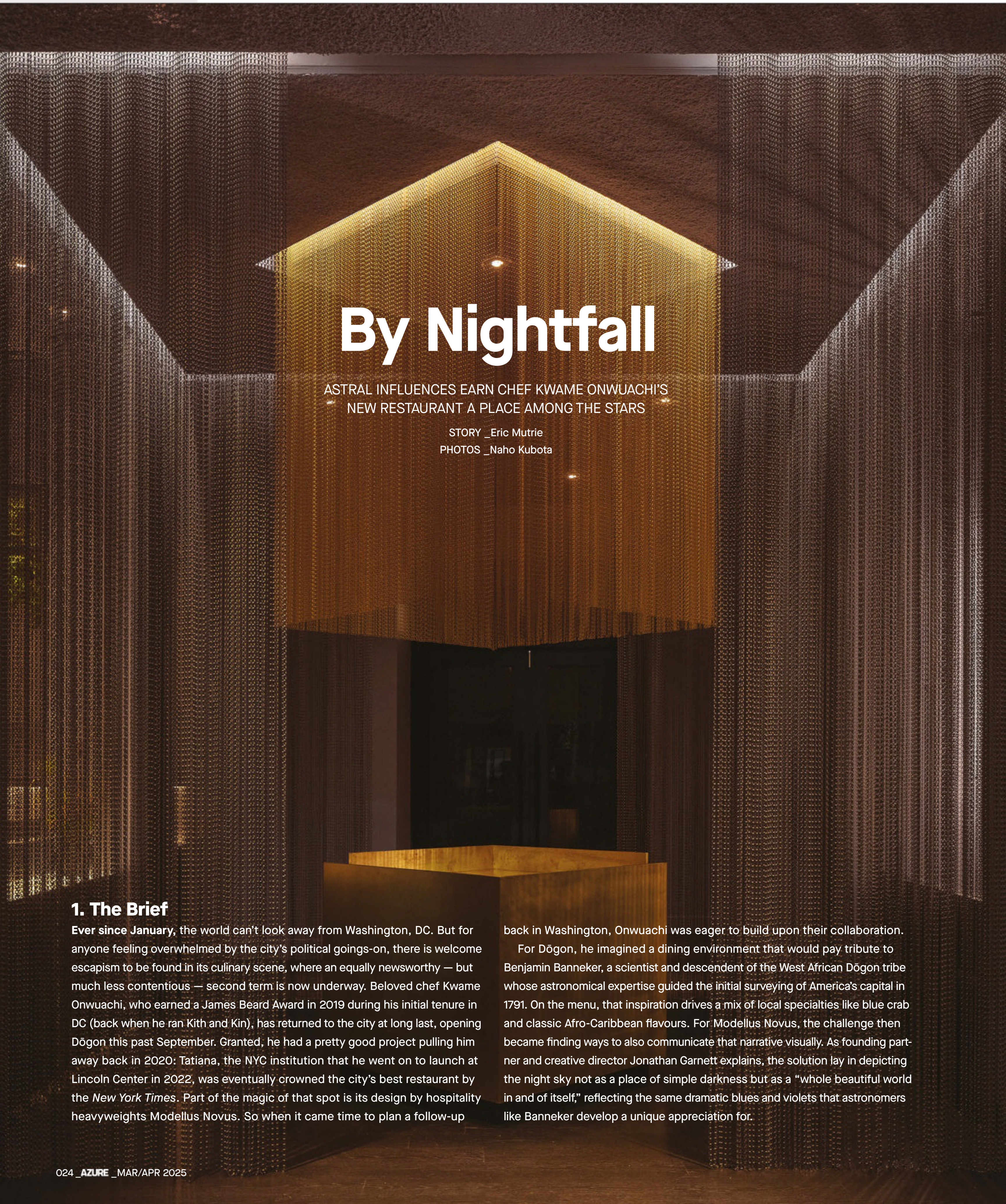


PHOTO BY JOACIM WINQVIST

Ride the Wave

The ongoing brutalism revival has scored two major wins lately. First, moviegoers responded enthusiastically to *The Brutalist*, Brady Corbet's three-and-a-half-hour celebration of concrete. Meanwhile, in Sweden, the designers at White Arkitekter made their own case for the movement's ongoing relevance. The seaport town of Varberg was never lacking for notable attractions — a castle built in the late 13th century and an early radio station facility are two of its historic draws. But with a growing residential population, the locality was in need of a water tower with higher capacity. The solution that the White design team came up with (working in collaboration with local government and the municipal water company Vivab) holds some 10,000 cubic metres of aqua — five times the capacity of its predecessor — while also adding a distinctive modern attraction to Varberg's tourism portfolio. The design's name, Våga Water Tower, plays on the dual nature of the Swedish term "våga," which can mean both "wave" and "dare." If brutalism has indeed returned, White Arkitekter's audacious infrastructure project is at the crest of the comeback. _ERIC MUTRIE az



By Nightfall

ASTRAL INFLUENCES EARN CHEF KWAME ONWUACHI'S
NEW RESTAURANT A PLACE AMONG THE STARS

STORY _Eric Mutrie
PHOTOS _Naho Kubota

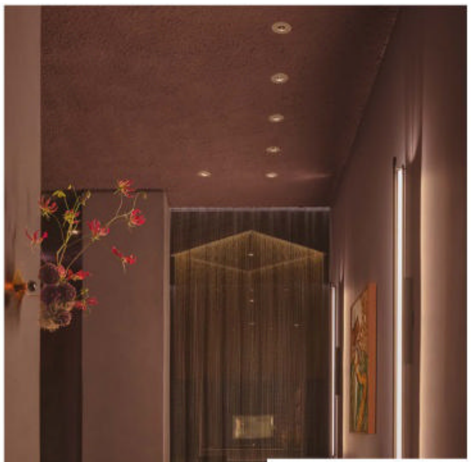
1. The Brief

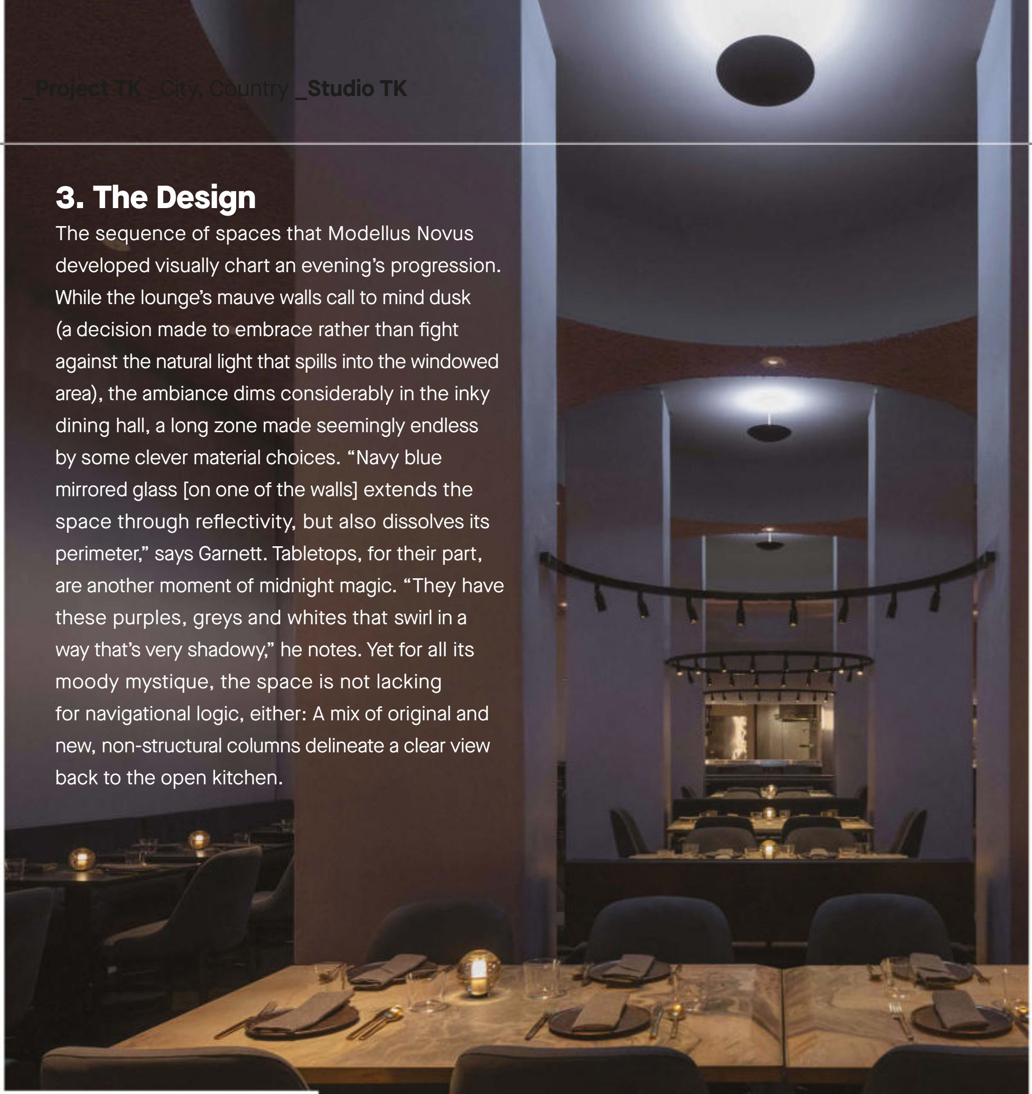
Ever since January, the world can't look away from Washington, DC. But for anyone feeling overwhelmed by the city's political goings-on, there is welcome escapism to be found in its culinary scene, where an equally newsworthy — but much less contentious — second term is now underway. Beloved chef Kwame Onwuachi, who earned a James Beard Award in 2019 during his initial tenure in DC (back when he ran Kith and Kin), has returned to the city at long last, opening Dōgon this past September. Granted, he had a pretty good project pulling him away back in 2020: Tatiana, the NYC institution that he went on to launch at Lincoln Center in 2022, was eventually crowned the city's best restaurant by the *New York Times*. Part of the magic of that spot is its design by hospitality heavyweights Modellus Novus. So when it came time to plan a follow-up back in Washington, Onwuachi was eager to build upon their collaboration.

For Dōgon, he imagined a dining environment that would pay tribute to Benjamin Banneker, a scientist and descendent of the West African Dōgon tribe whose astronomical expertise guided the initial surveying of America's capital in 1791. On the menu, that inspiration drives a mix of local specialties like blue crab and classic Afro-Caribbean flavours. For Modellus Novus, the challenge then became finding ways to also communicate that narrative visually. As founding partner and creative director Jonathan Garnett explains, the solution lay in depicting the night sky not as a place of simple darkness but as a "whole beautiful world in and of itself," reflecting the same dramatic blues and violets that astronomers like Banneker develop a unique appreciation for.

↓ 2. The Setting

Dōgon replaces an earlier dining room in the Salamander hotel that was originally "one big space, without any of the sense of intimacy and mystery that were in Kwame's telling of this story about nighttime," says Garnett. In his and his team's 445-square-metre reconfiguration, diners now arrive at a brushed brass front desk with a lounge to the left and the main dining room beyond. Adding to the intrigue, lights illuminate sheets of Kriskadecor's aluminum links — used here as a reference to surveyor's chains.





3. The Design

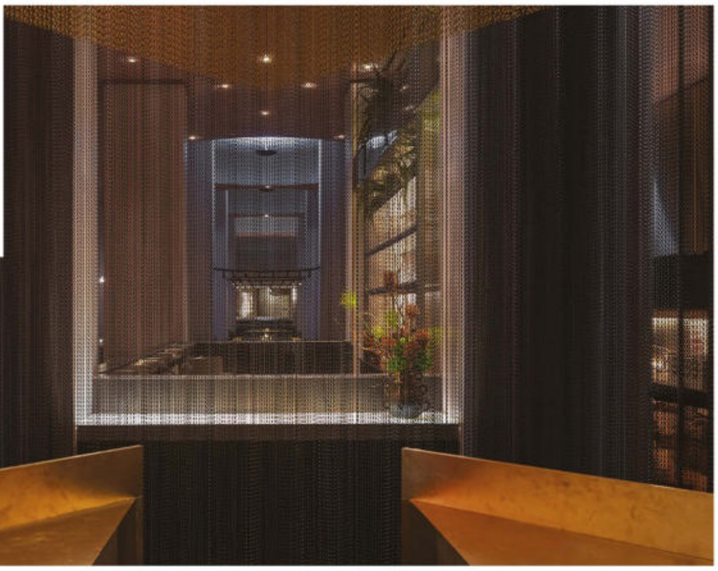
The sequence of spaces that Modellus Novus developed visually chart an evening's progression. While the lounge's mauve walls call to mind dusk (a decision made to embrace rather than fight against the natural light that spills into the windowed area), the ambiance dims considerably in the inky dining hall, a long zone made seemingly endless by some clever material choices. "Navy blue mirrored glass [on one of the walls] extends the space through reflectivity, but also dissolves its perimeter," says Garnett. Tabletops, for their part, are another moment of midnight magic. "They have these purples, greys and whites that swirl in a way that's very shadowy," he notes. Yet for all its moody mystique, the space is not lacking for navigational logic, either: A mix of original and new, non-structural columns delineate a clear view back to the open kitchen.

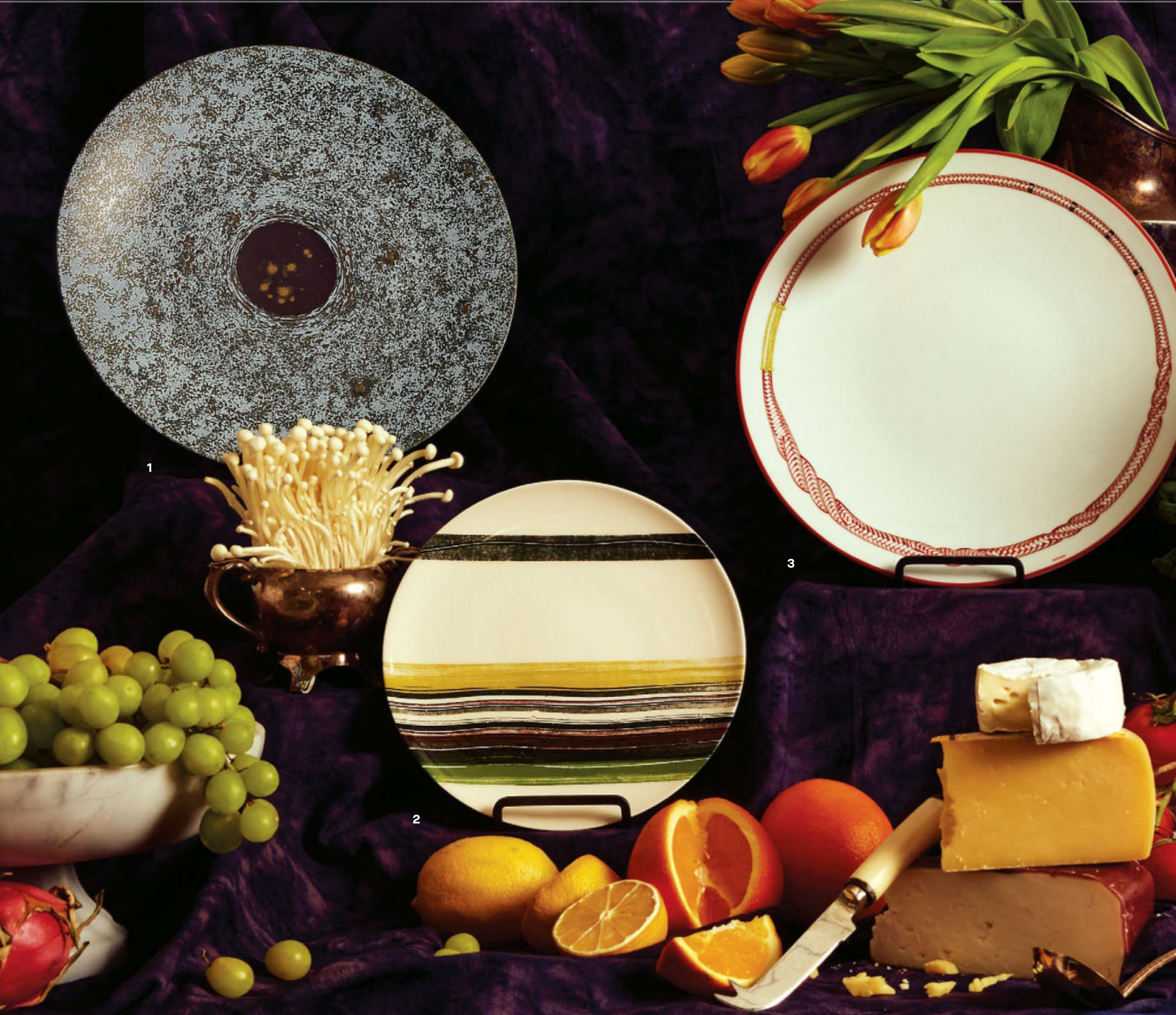
→ 4. The Details

If Dōgon has a certain theatrical spirit, there's a reason: The project's lighting consultant, David Weiner Design, is led by a seasoned Broadway vet. Here, he worked with Modellus Novus to calibrate the fixtures illuminating the dining room's ceiling domes to a cool 4100 Kelvin, the same temperature as moonlight. But the designers were still careful to balance this effect with moments of golden glow. "People like warmth for gathering, so we didn't want that astral feeling to be too overwhelming," says Garnett. Enter rows of Bocci pendants joined by matching portables on each table. "They become like candles in a dark room — this natural way to bring people together," he says. The Roll & Hill chandelier in the private dining room was another strategic lighting selection, chosen for its resemblance to lunar exploration spacecraft.

↓ 5. The Scene

Since Dōgon's opening, Garnett has kept tabs on the photos that diners post on Instagram. "One thing that I've been able to pick up on is the pride that people have in going there," he says. "They really get dressed up to have a good time. And there's something in there that's really meaningful to me — to see what the design has inspired from people, and this phenomenon that Kwame has created." Forget the White House — in Washington, the night sky over Dōgon is the city's bright spot. **az**





Visual Feast

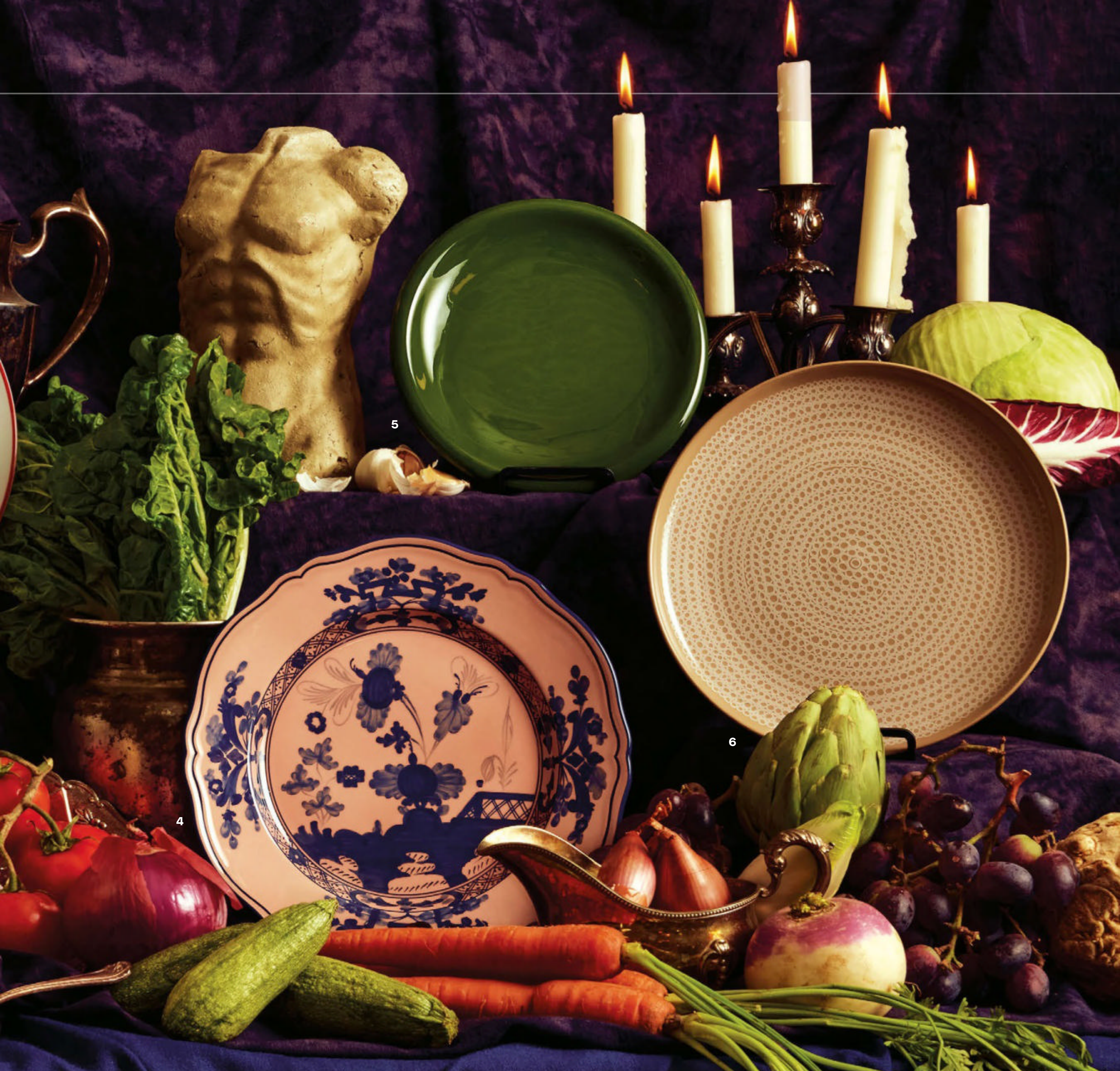
A BAROQUE SPRING BANQUET IN SIX COURSES, WITH MODERN DINNERWARE AS THE MAIN DISH

BY _Eric Mutrie
PHOTO _Christie Vuong

1. HOSHIKAGE
Named for the Japanese word for “starlight,” this 19-piece collection designed by Yabu Pushelberg marks the 120th anniversary of **Noritake** by demonstrating the brand’s finely honed production expertise. Textural treatments evoke the mysterious night sky — perfect for anyone who only eats after dark. US$240

2. HORIZON
Cult favourite Milanese ceramics-maker **Laboratorio Paravicini** adapted a dozen of Italian artist Vittore Frattini’s abstract linear canvases into hand-finished, hand-decorated earthenware capturing the beauty of far-off vistas. Dinner (or in this case, dessert) and a view! $760 FOR SIX, AT RIVER CROSSING SHOP

3. TRESSAGES EQUESTRES
“Once upon a time, there was an enchanting tablescape...” French children’s book illustrator Virginie Jamin honours the storied equestrian heritage and artisanal production of **Hermès** by bordering the perimeters of this 27-piece dining set with drawings of braided harnesses. Each decorative element is produced using a hand-laid chromolithography printing process. $280



4. ORIENTE ITALIANO

Let the garden party of the ages commence. **Ginori 1735**'s handcrafted-in-Italy porcelain features a classic floral motif by Gio Ponti (shown in Cipria) that references 18th-century Faenza and Far Eastern ceramics alike. A scalloped rim gives the 1946 design enduring edge.
$225 AT HOPSON GRACE

5. BRONTO

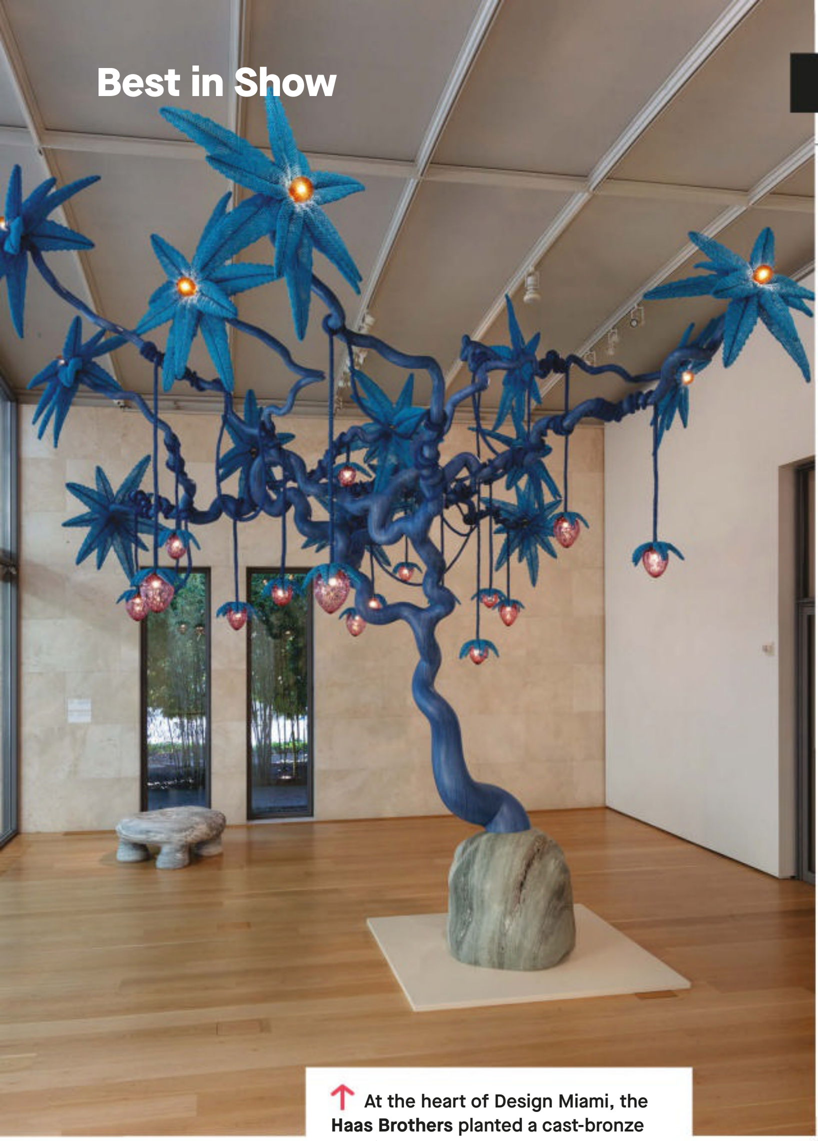
Hem's snack-sized ceramic plates may be small — but thanks to their exaggerated outer lip and high-gloss glaze (offered in five colours), the Supergroup designs still manage to exude a larger-than-life personality. Hence the collection's name, which is an abbreviation of "Brontosaurus" — a fact that's sure to play well with any paleontologists at your potluck. $110 FOR TWO

6. SIIRTOLAPUUTARHA

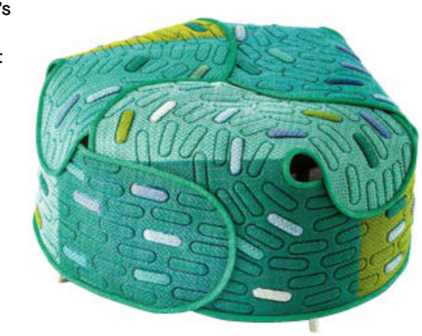
Marimekko and Finnish designer Maija Louekari remind diners to eat their fruits and vegetables with a dotted pattern inspired by allotment gardens. A beige base tone grounds the dishwasher- and oven-safe stoneware in an appropriately earthy hue. $50

BATIK TABLECLOTH (AS BACKDROP) BY MATHESON, US$90

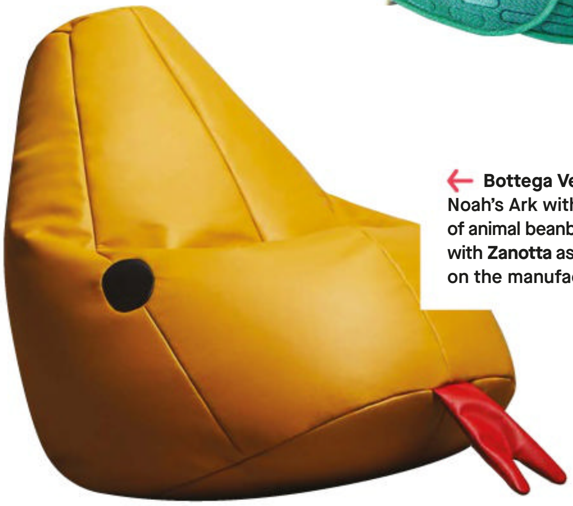
Best in Show



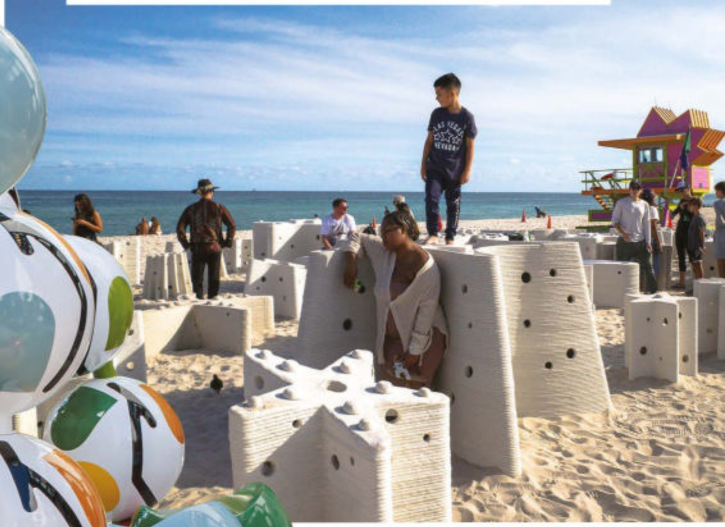
At the heart of Design Miami, the **Haas Brothers** planted a cast-bronze tree (originally installed at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, Texas, shown) featuring beaded blue flowers that bore glowing blown-glass strawberries.



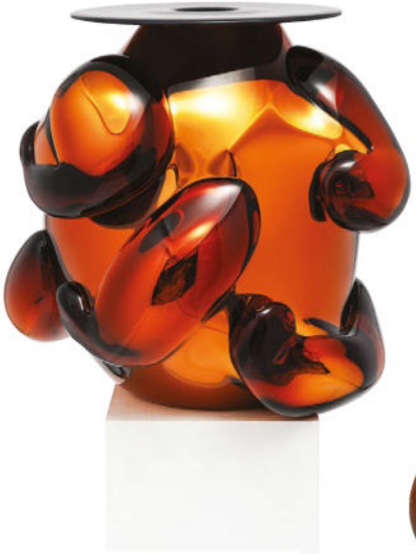
Designed by Nendo using leftover and discarded materials, **Paola Lenti**'s Hana-arashi collection (first unveiled in Milan this spring) proved a perfect match for Miami's bold spirit during its American debut.



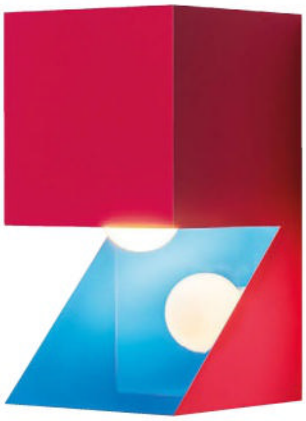
Bottega Veneta channelled Noah's Ark with its viral collection of animal beanbag chairs, introduced with **Zanotta** as a limited-edition riff on the manufacturer's Sacco chair.



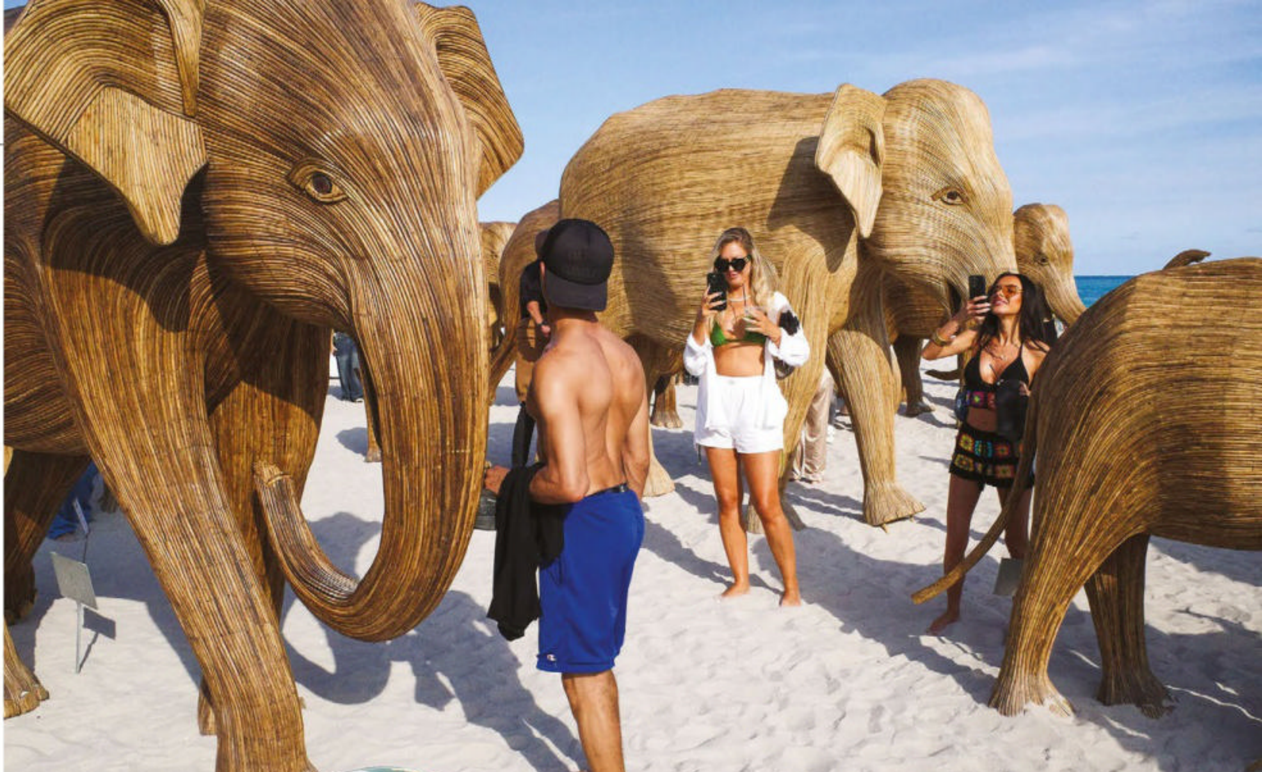
Plans are underway for the ReefLine, an 11.27-kilometre artificial reef (and sculpture park) off Miami Beach. In the meantime, artist **Carlos Betancourt** and architect **Alberto Latorre** presented an early prototype in the form of 46 3D-printed stars made from a zero-cement geopolymer concrete — and filled with nooks and crannies that mimic natural fish habitats.



Capturing the thrill of the molten glass–blowing process, **Lasvit** creative director Maxim Velčovský presented Magmatic, a trio of fluid vessels.



Illuminating one of the hotel rooms at the Miami River Inn, where Alcova Miami held its second edition, Zurich architect **Marco Zelli**'s two-toned Nefertiti lamp features just one bulb — but thanks to a 45-degree mirrored panel, it appears to have two.



Crafted from an invasive Indian weed by Indigenous artisans from the **Real Elephant Collective**, one hundred jumbo sculptures marched across Miami Beach. After two weeks, each one was sold as a fundraiser for global conservation programs.

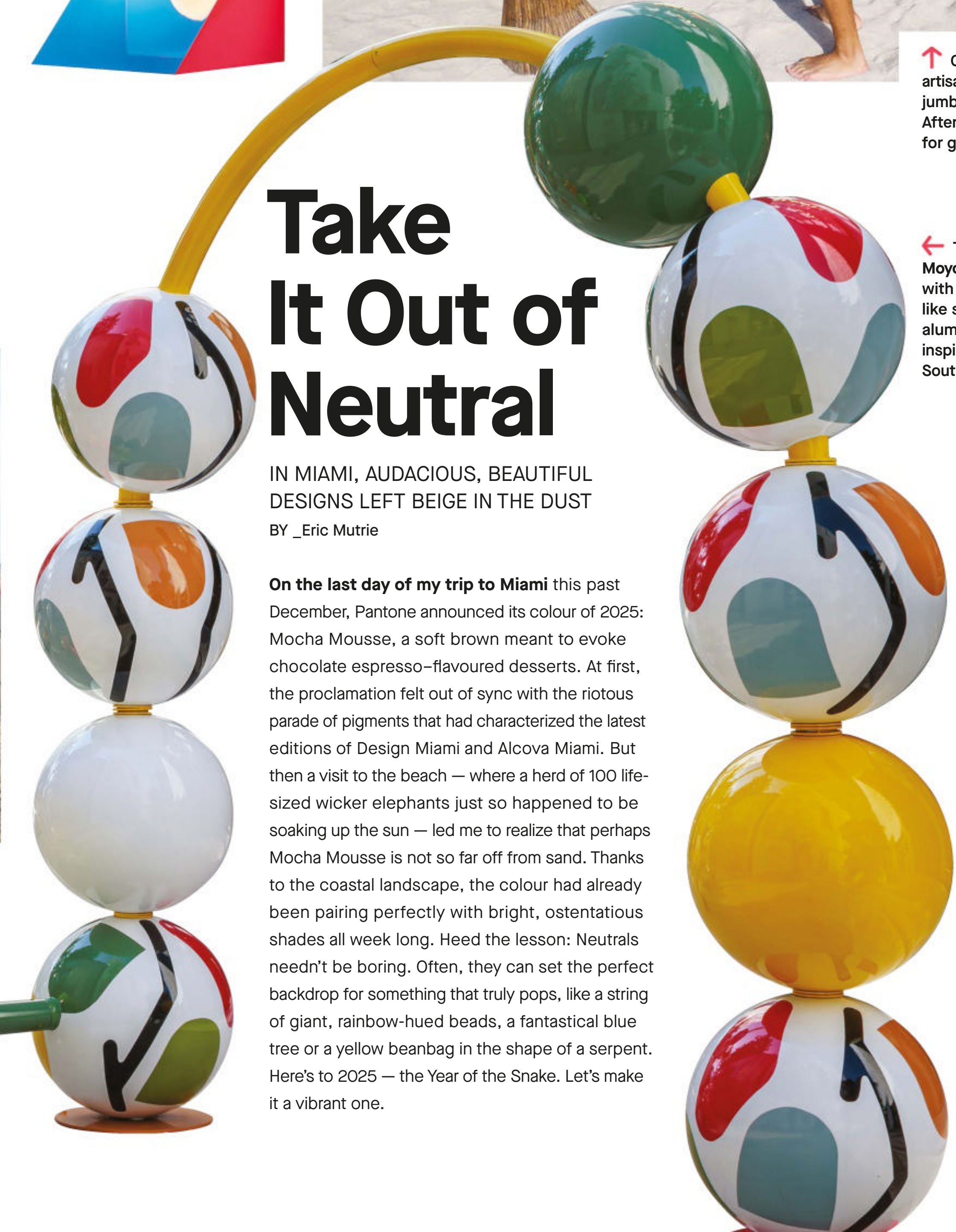
PHOTOS BY ELLER STUDIO (MARCO ZELLI); ERIC MUTRIE (ELEPHANTS AND REEFLINE); KRIS TAMBURELLO (NICOLE NOMSA MOYO); TODORA PHOTOGRAPHY (HAAS BROTHERS)

Take It Out of Neutral

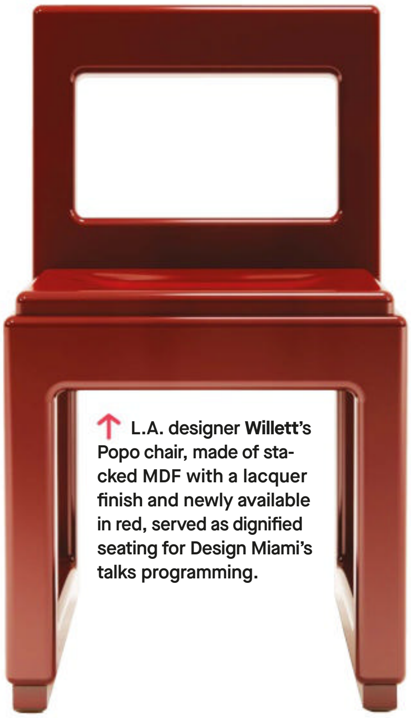
IN MIAMI, AUDACIOUS, BEAUTIFUL DESIGNS LEFT BEIGE IN THE DUST

BY _Eric Mutrie

On the last day of my trip to Miami this past December, Pantone announced its colour of 2025: Mocha Mousse, a soft brown meant to evoke chocolate espresso–flavoured desserts. At first, the proclamation felt out of sync with the riotous parade of pigments that had characterized the latest editions of Design Miami and Alcova Miami. But then a visit to the beach — where a herd of 100 life-sized wicker elephants just so happened to be soaking up the sun — led me to realize that perhaps Mocha Mousse is not so far off from sand. Thanks to the coastal landscape, the colour had already been pairing perfectly with bright, ostentatious shades all week long. Heed the lesson: Neutrals needn't be boring. Often, they can set the perfect backdrop for something that truly pops, like a string of giant, rainbow-hued beads, a fantastical blue tree or a yellow beanbag in the shape of a serpent. Here's to 2025 — the Year of the Snake. Let's make it a vibrant one.



Toronto-based designer **Nicole Nomsa Moyo** bedazzled the Miami Design District with "Pearl Jam," a collection of bracelet-like sculptures that strung together large aluminum beads painted with patterns inspired by the Ndebele women of Moyo's South African homeland.

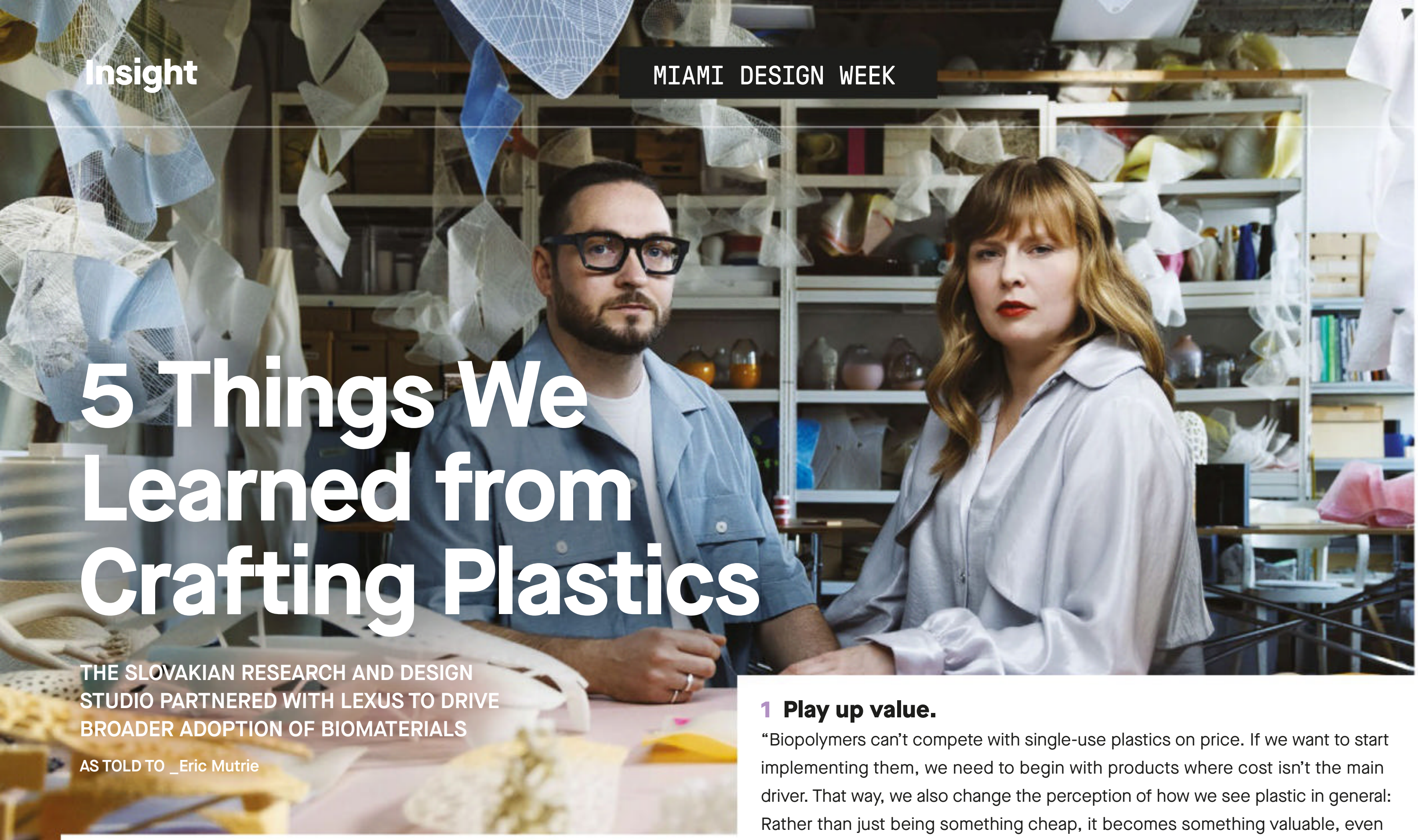


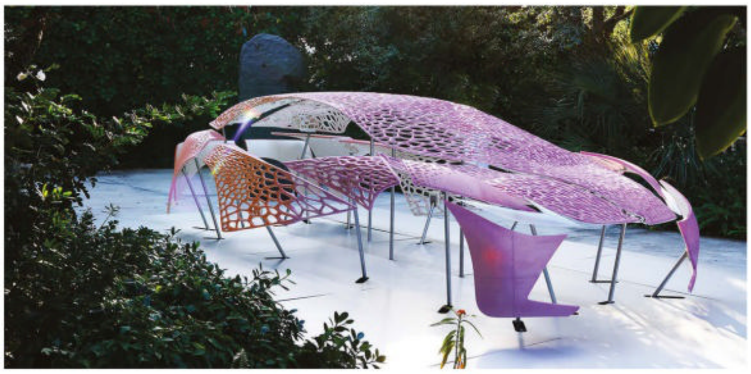
L.A. designer **Willett's** Popo chair, made of stacked MDF with a lacquer finish and newly available in red, served as dignified seating for Design Miami's talks programming.

5 Things We Learned from Crafting Plastics

THE SLOVAKIAN RESEARCH AND DESIGN STUDIO PARTNERED WITH LEXUS TO DRIVE BROADER ADOPTION OF BIOMATERIALS

AS TOLD TO _Eric Mutrie





Back when Vlasta Kubušová was completing her Master of Design in Berlin, she found that many of her courses were dedicated to working with plastic. She understood why: “It’s the most widespread material, and it’s cheap,” she says. But at the same time, it wasn’t something that she was particularly eager to use. Instead, she started exploring eco-friendly alternatives. In 2016, together with her partner, Miroslav Král (who comes from a stage design background), she founded Crafting Plastics, a studio devoted to developing biopolymers from sugars, starches, algae and cellulose.

Since then, the duo has specialized in translating cutting-edge research into compelling bio-spectacles. Its latest proof of concept was *Liminal Cycles*, shown above at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, in collaboration with Lexus this past December. At the heart of the installation, a silhouette of the Lexus LF-ZC concept car imagined a future where automobile finishes are manufactured with bioplastics. To highlight the natural properties of its Nuatan bioplastic, Crafting Plastics set up the car to “breathe” (moving inward and outward) in response to human motion, and to change colour based on the level of ultraviolet radiation. “I think that’s what I consider a strong piece: if it sparks curiosity, shows possibilities and makes people more conscious,” Kubušová says. Four additional components — a series of stools, a rotating lattice-like tower, a glowing sculpture that looked like a cross between a steering wheel and an exotic flower, and a limited-edition vase available for purchase — rounded out the Lexus collaboration. Here, Kubušová elaborates on the exciting possibilities of bioplastics.

1 Play up value.

“Biopolymers can’t compete with single-use plastics on price. If we want to start implementing them, we need to begin with products where cost isn’t the main driver. That way, we also change the perception of how we see plastic in general: Rather than just being something cheap, it becomes something valuable, even though it’s compostable. Crafting Plastics started off by designing eyewear frames. They’re more personal than a plastic bottle because they add to your identity. The vase that we designed for the Lexus capsule collection is another example. When people see a brand like that interested in this application, they also get inspired.”

2 Foster deeper connection.

“I can tell you that something is a bioplastic, but what does that really mean? We realized that the material lacked identity. Since smell is mostly associated with natural materials, we wanted to figure out if by adding smell to bioplastics through synthetic biology, people would start to perceive them differently. That was the idea behind our scented BreaZea room divider, which we first showed at Salone del Mobile in 2021. And it worked — it triggered a lot of emotion. Then, in our installation for Lexus, we developed stools, modelled on the backrest of a driver’s seat, that also released a subtle scent.”

3 Build in environmental commentary.

“We have been researching if the molecules in our materials can react to certain things that we might not see to signal threats and help us adapt. They become like a diagnostic tool that’s happening without any software — or an indicator species, like frogs. The car sculpture that we designed for *Liminal Cycles* changes colour as the day progresses. As UV levels rise, the material turns a more intense purple. It’s an example of how to communicate an issue — in this case, UV intensity, which is becoming much worse because of climate change.”

4 Evolve and adapt.

“The 3D-printed lattice structure in our Miami installation featured a delicate version of our Nuatan material, whereas the skin that we used for the car sculpture is much more durable. We are working to design different formulations for different types of products based on whether something needs to be here for two years or 50 years. I don’t think we really need any bioplastics that will be here for 1,000 years.”

5 Avoid the apocalypse.

“Our material, Nuatan, is named after an island in the Solomon Islands that disappeared because of the sea level rise. It’s symbolic, because our work is driven by the problems that can happen to all of us if we don’t do anything.” az

PHOTOS BY STEVE BENISTY (PORTRAIT); COURTESY OF LEXUS (SCULPTURE)

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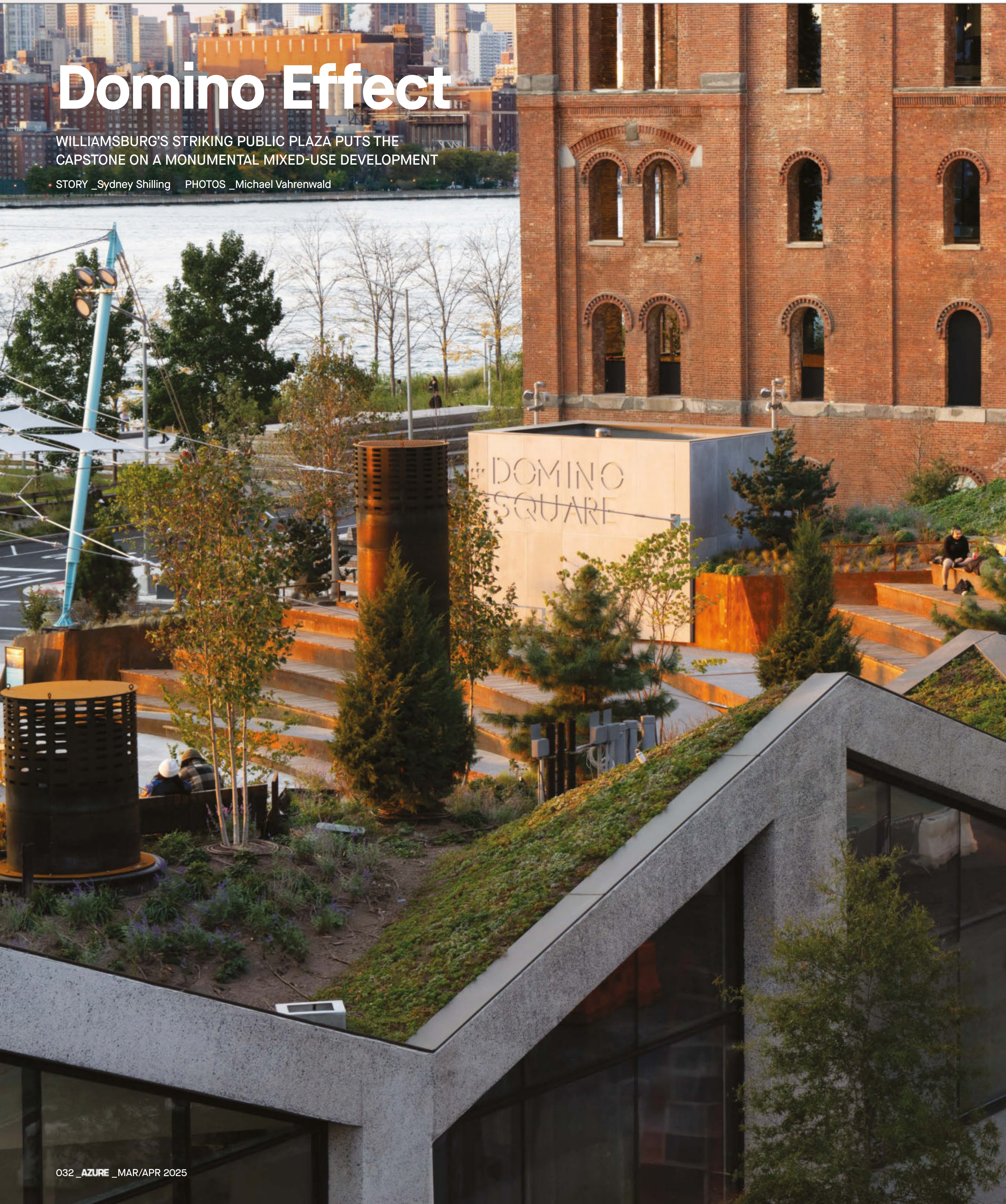
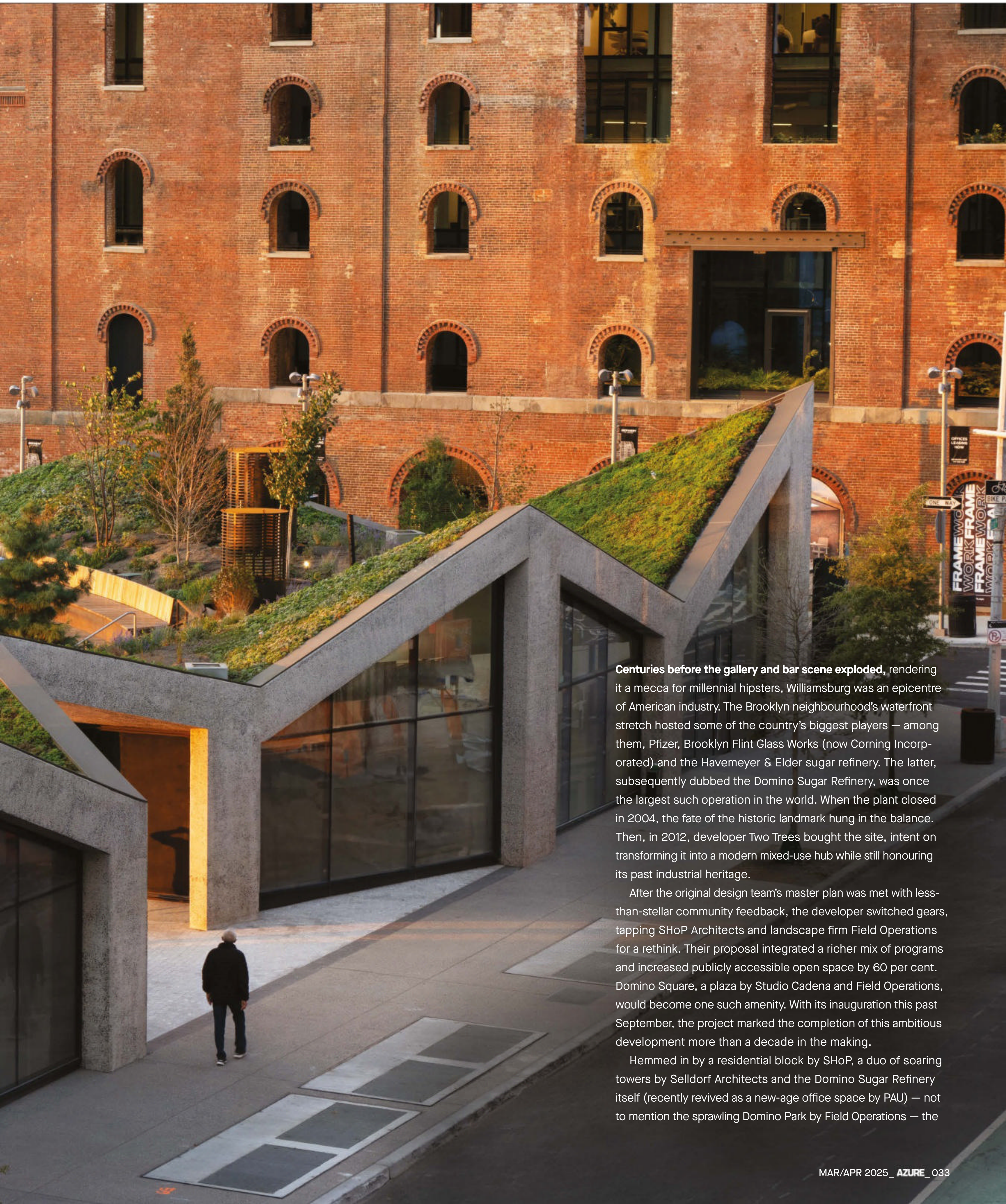


Domino Effect

WILLIAMSBURG'S STRIKING PUBLIC PLAZA PUTS THE CAPSTONE ON A MONUMENTAL MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

STORY _Sydney Shilling PHOTOS _Michael Vahrenwald

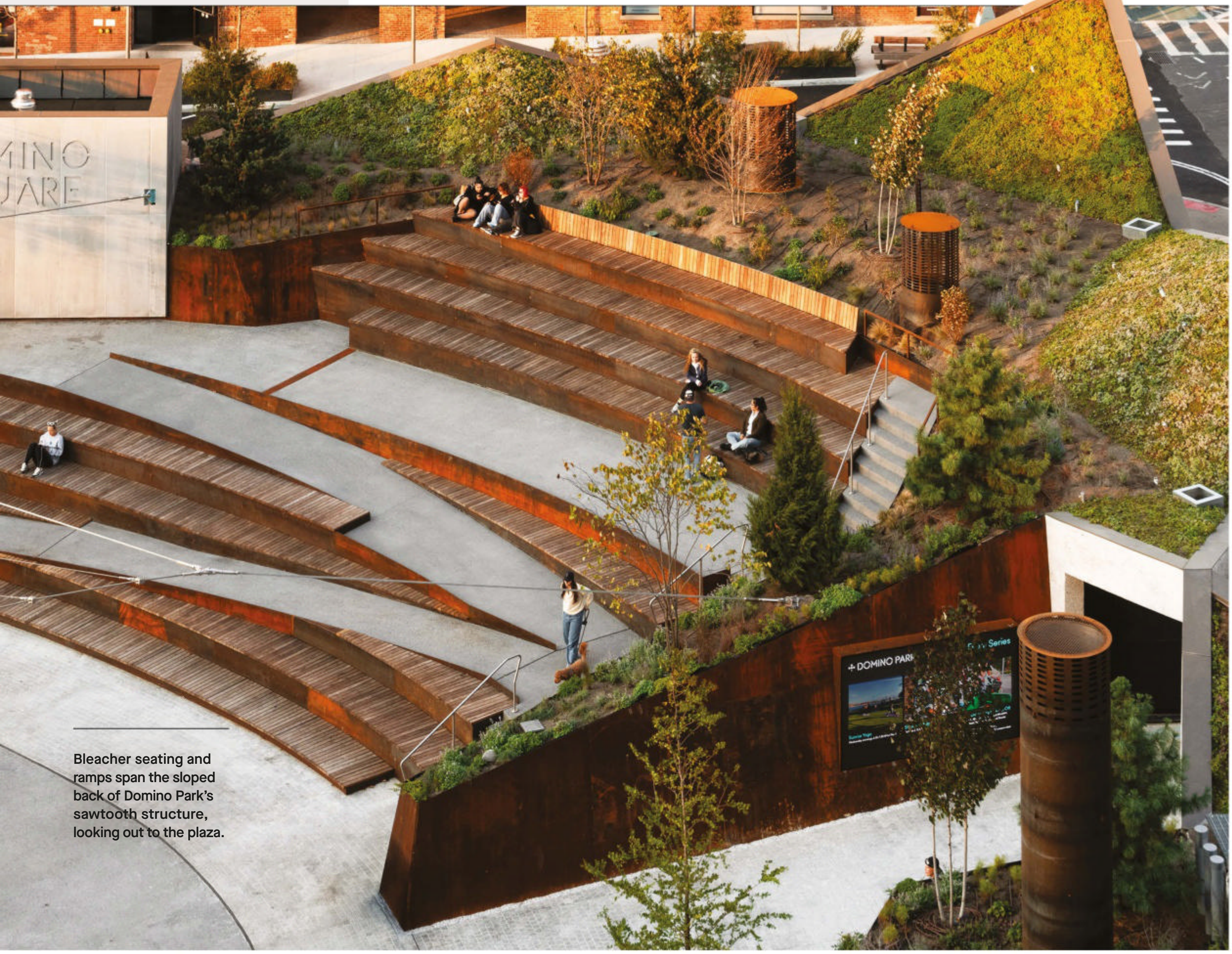


Centuries before the gallery and bar scene exploded, rendering it a mecca for millennial hipsters, Williamsburg was an epicentre of American industry. The Brooklyn neighbourhood's waterfront stretch hosted some of the country's biggest players — among them, Pfizer, Brooklyn Flint Glass Works (now Corning Incorporated) and the Havemeyer & Elder sugar refinery. The latter, subsequently dubbed the Domino Sugar Refinery, was once the largest such operation in the world. When the plant closed in 2004, the fate of the historic landmark hung in the balance. Then, in 2012, developer Two Trees bought the site, intent on transforming it into a modern mixed-use hub while still honouring its past industrial heritage.

After the original design team's master plan was met with less-than-stellar community feedback, the developer switched gears, tapping SHoP Architects and landscape firm Field Operations for a rethink. Their proposal integrated a richer mix of programs and increased publicly accessible open space by 60 per cent. Domino Square, a plaza by Studio Cadena and Field Operations, would become one such amenity. With its inauguration this past September, the project marked the completion of this ambitious development more than a decade in the making.

Hemmed in by a residential block by SHoP, a duo of soaring towers by Selldorf Architects and the Domino Sugar Refinery itself (recently revived as a new-age office space by PAU) — not to mention the sprawling Domino Park by Field Operations — the

_Domino Square _Brooklyn, New York **_Studio Cadena and Field Operations**



Bleacher seating and ramps span the sloped back of Domino Park's sawtooth structure, looking out to the plaza.

project had high expectations to contend with. For Studio Cadena, tasked with designing the building that frames the public space (which, for its part, is another Field Operations undertaking), this blend of old and new served as the starting point.

The structure needed to accommodate a few key programs: back-of-house support spaces for the park, as well as retail. The twist? It also had to sit on top of a new water treatment facility that would serve the surrounding community so as not to overburden the current infrastructure with all this development. The architecture had to consider the spans of the holding tanks beneath while mitigating the odours and noises that go along with them. "In a way, it's what all buildings have to do with their mechanical systems and invisible components. But here, it was on steroids, because it's not just one building — it's the entire infrastructure of the surrounding buildings," explains founder and architect Benjamin Cadena.

There was also a desire to embrace the site's natural grade change toward the East River and create a sense of enclosure around the plaza, which hosts a range of seasonal activities, from ice skating to movie nights and farmers' markets. To that end, the architect conceived of a structure with a dynamic, zigzagging roofline that animates the street-facing retail loggia — and forms a series of rooftop planting beds that range in depth. Tubular ducts from the water treatment facility poke through the elevated landscape, embracing the site's industrial character and hinting at what lies below. "It was always a conversation between the infrastructure and the landscape, and the building being this kind of mediator between the two. It's the sliver that you perceive on the ground," Cadena adds.

On the opposite elevation, meanwhile, the building steps down to the water in an amphitheatre-like arrangement, clad in warm wood and Corten steel. In a space that spans the length of a city block, the move fosters a remarkable sense of intimacy. "The geometry was perhaps a contrast to the context, and the sectional question became an opportunity," he explains. "The building creates a memorable landmark toward the water, but it connects to the scale of the body and then rises to reach out to the larger towers. In a way, it was trying to mediate scale. But the form was not meant to blend in at all." Nevertheless, it weaves the surrounding area together. "It completes the promise to the community, transforming a city block into a new civic space," says Lisa Tziona Switkin, who worked on the adjacent park as a partner at Field Operations. "More than an urban plaza, it has become a vibrant outdoor living room for Williamsburg."

As for the material palette, Cadena and his team opted for sandblasted concrete, not just for its storm resilience but also for its rough and rugged nature, a reference to the exposed aggregate sidewalks that run throughout the Domino campus. "We wanted the material of the building to have this same quality — that it would age in a certain way, that it would feel like it was part of the place," he says. "These are buildings that were never meant to be precious." **az**

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Building Envelope

_Bold New Bricks _Sugarcrete _Durable Roofing

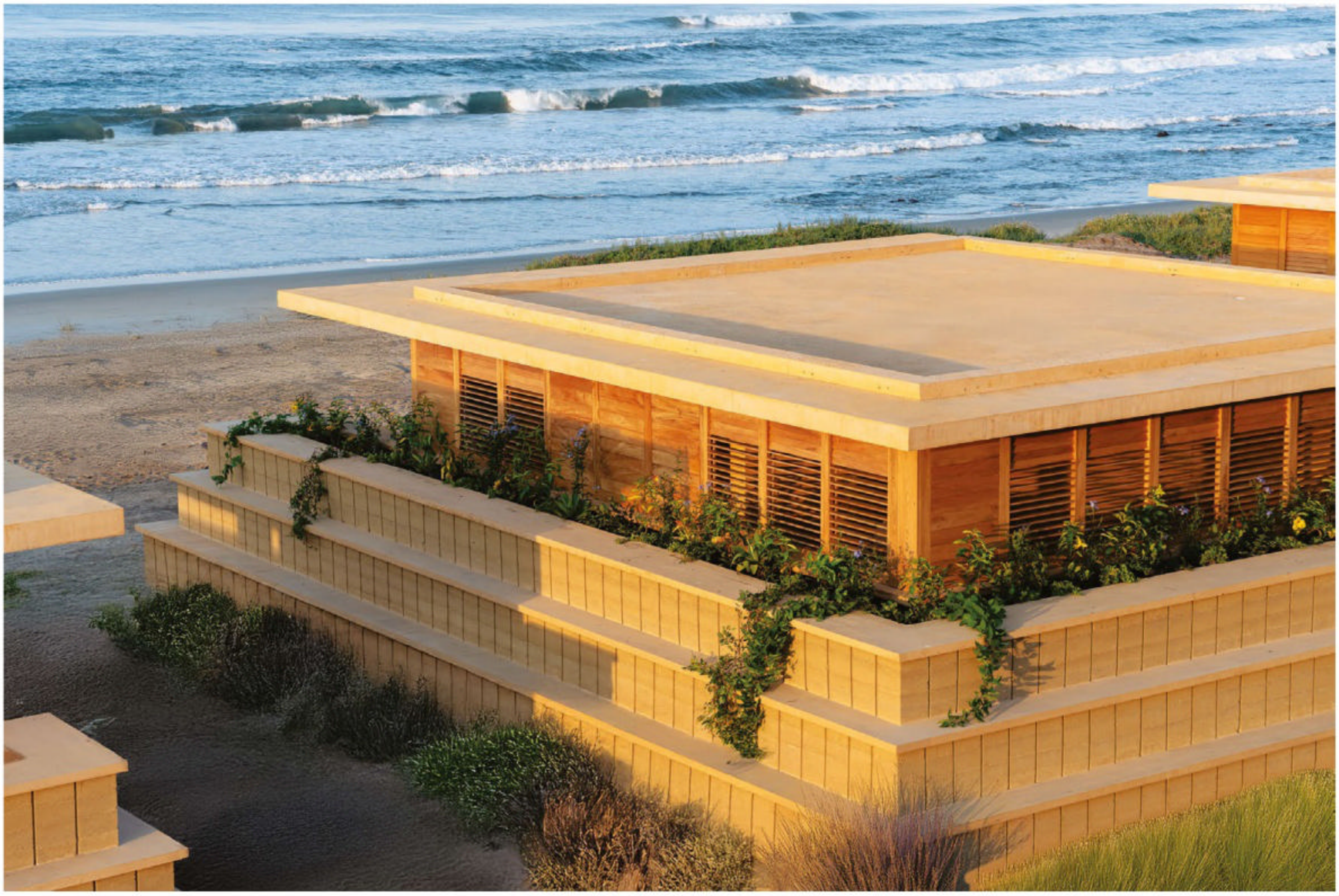
EDITOR _Kendra Jackson

PHOTO BY LOREM IPSUM DOLORE

From the Earth

A NEW HOTEL BY PRODUCTORA IN OAXACA, MEXICO, IS BUILT TO GROW WITH ITS SURROUNDINGS

STORY _Kendra Jackson



ABOVE: Sitting low on the landscape, the 22 guest suites at Kymaia offer privacy through their pyramidal form. Large windows that face the ocean provide spectacular views, while shutters made from local wood and gauzy drapes help control the interior climate.

LEFT: Chosen for their thermal qualities and local availability, the rammed earth blocks "will age beautifully and naturally and let the pyramids evolve with the landscape over time," says architect Natalia Badia.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KYMAIA

Mere steps from the ocean, and enveloped by mangroves, wetlands and gardens bursting with native flora, the newly opened Kymaia Hotel is at one with its surroundings just outside of Puerto Escondido in Oaxaca, Mexico. The latest hospitality venture by entrepreneur Ezequiel Ayarza Sforza is positioned as "an oasis where luxury and nature intertwine in a delicate balance" that celebrates sustainability, biodiversity and the cultural heritage of the region. To bring his holistic vision to life, Ayarza Sforza called on Mexico City–based architecture studio Productora, a firm known for context-appropriate and timeless designs that incorporate tradition and emotion along with a touch of playfulness and the unexpected.

"We wanted to create a strong connection between the organic landscape and the hard architecture," says Productora associate architect Natalia Badia of the resort, which comprises 22 private guest suites, three restaurants, a spa and a yoga studio, as well as walking trails and a pool. (Mexican design firm The Book of Wa was responsible for the interiors.) To establish that harmonious relationship with the land — one that complements the area's natural beauty — the team employed traditional materials and building techniques that minimize impacts on the environment.

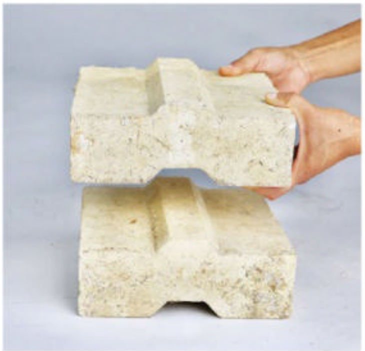
Inspired by pre-Hispanic pyramids, the individual guest suites were built from rammed earth blocks, approximately 500 of them per building. They were crafted by local artisans at a production site nearby, then carefully stacked by hand; thin horizontal poured-in-place concrete slabs between each row lend strength and stability. The stepped structures form a "containing element for the private spaces within the suites," says Badia. "The material also acts as thermal walls that deflect heat and direct sun to keep the interiors cool."

To ensure the interiors were as open as possible, an inverted structural beam system was used to support the flat roof without cluttering up the floor space. Projecting 1.5 metres out from the volumes, the clean-lined, pigmented-concrete roof slabs also provide a shading element that doesn't distract from the organized silhouettes. Locally sourced Macuil wood lines the suites' interiors — designed with a mix of Mexican and Japanese influences — and was used for the operable shutters that assist in cross-ventilation by controlling ocean breezes and minimizing sun glare during the day.

Complemented by Productora's landscaping and bioclimatic methods — like solar energy and a wetlands system that treats wastewater before redistributing it into the ecosystem — the rammed earth structures that dot the grounds create a "synergy" with the landscape, one that is sensitive, supportive and nothing short of stunning. az

LEFT: Made from bagasse, a waste product from sugarcane production, Sugarcrete blocks sequester more carbon than clay and concrete of equal volume.

BELOW: Alan Chandler (left) and Armor Gutiérrez Rivas (right) with Francisco Izquierdo, whose sugarcane and rum facility Ron El Mondero, in Granada, Spain, provides the researchers with bagasse.



More Sugar, Please

A TEAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON IS TURNING SUGARCANE WASTE INTO A SUSTAINABLE CONCRETE ALTERNATIVE

STORY _Kendra Jackson

BELOW: A worker builds a wall using Sugarcrete blocks (samples of which are shown at right) at a school in India, the first prototype building to use the material.

New artificial sweeteners keep being invented, but sugar remains one of the world's most popular ingredients — an estimated 194 million tonnes were produced between 2023 and 2024. Manufacturing all that sweetness comes with a cost. Along with detrimental health implications, the global sugar production industry has significant impacts on the environment, contributing to water and air pollution, land degradation and a massive amount of agricultural waste — a main component of that being bagasse, the fibrous material left over from sugarcane after it has been pulverized to extract its juices. While the low-carbon, renewable material is often upcycled into paper and packaging or used as a biofuel, bagasse is still a relatively underutilized resource. Researchers at the University of East London (UEL) are ready to change that.

Since 2021, Armor Gutiérrez Rivas, an architect and senior lecturer at the university's Sustainability Research Institute (SRI), SRI associate Alan Chandler and SRI senior research fellow Bamdad Ayati have been leading a team of students in the development of Sugarcrete, a pioneering bio-based and low-carbon alternative to concrete. As part of a wider research and sustainability project to regenerate the Royal Docks waterfront, students from the design studio had approached local sugar-maker — and neighbour — Tate & Lyle Sugars with a proposal to collaboratively explore how to divert bagasse from its waste stream to use as construction materials for the area. Prototypes of the sustainable building blocks were realized by reinforcing the fibrous leftovers with a variety of mineral binders, producing a material with a carbon footprint "six times lower than clay brick and three times lower than concrete blocks of equal volume," say Gutiérrez Rivas and Chandler. "Sugarcrete has been tested to industry standards for fire resistance, compressive strength, thermal conductivity and durability."

But Sugarcrete's potential goes beyond bettering just the building industry. It will be positioned as an international grassroots initiative and open-source knowledge base aimed at benefiting economies and reviving heritage across Europe and the Global South. "The environmental benefit of cane cultivation provides a unique sensory character where the sight and sound of marine breezes have created waves of blue water and green sugarcane for over 1,400 years," say Gutiérrez Rivas and Chandler. "Working with municipalities, local cane producers, construction supply chains and industry partners, [it can] re-establish the 'green sea' and enable pilot production facilities that benefit from research, testing and CE certification and establish the credentials of the material for the European market" — all while creating "a unique tourist experience unlike any in the region."

There is also the possibility to resurrect dormant cane plantations and transform defunct concrete factories into bio-based manufacturing facilities to bring industry back to regions that frequently rely on imported construction materials, giving local producers and makers the ability to create new, affordable and low-carbon vernacular building components. At its essence, Sugarcrete is more than a revolutionary material — it is a coalescence of design, sustainability and community impact. How sweet is that? az

PHOTOS BY KATERINA HUDAKOVA (TOP); MEGAN JONES (SAMPLES); HUSAIN AKBAR (SCHOOL)

photo: Andrea Garuti

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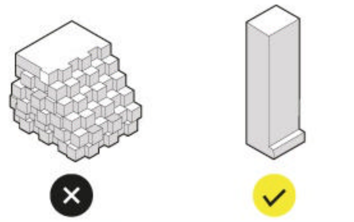
TORONTO FIRM BDP QUADRANGLE HAS DEVELOPED AN INSIGHTFUL GUIDELINE TO ASSIST ARCHITECTS IN DESIGNING CARBON-CONSCIOUS BUILDINGS

AS TOLD TO _Kendra Jackson

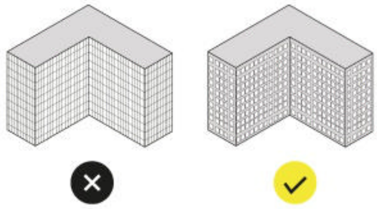
Back in the late spring of 2023, Toronto became the first city in North America to implement new standards to limit upfront embodied carbon emissions in new municipally owned buildings through the use of lower-carbon construction materials. Mandated for all City buildings (and certain private developments), the standards require that upfront embodied carbon emissions — those generated from material extraction, manufacturing, and the transportation and assembly of structural and envelope systems — be capped at 350 kgCO2e/m2. In response, local architecture firm BDP Quadrangle, which made its own commitment that 100 per cent of its projects would be net-zero carbon–ready with a targeted embodied carbon intensity (ECI) of 250 kgCO2e/m2 by 2030, assessed 44 of its already built multi-unit residential projects to understand the impacts of ECI on envelope expression, form and material selection. “We wanted to create an accessible tool box to understand and influence design decisions with regards to embodied carbon,” says architect and innovation director Michelle Xuereb.

Focused on the building envelope, the multi-month undertaking resulted in a comprehensive data set that provides architects with a tool to determine an embodied carbon budget long before shovel hits ground. Here, Xuereb shares some key considerations when devising a low-carbon, sustainable building.



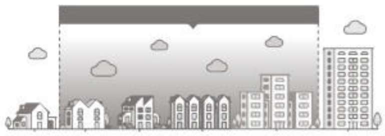
SIMPLER FORMS > COMPLEX FORMS

BDP Quadrangle found that 23 per cent of a building’s embodied carbon is derived from its envelope, and the more complicated the design, the bigger that impact. A major factor related to this is the vertical floor area ratios (VFAR), since buildings with a lower VFAR will minimize material demands by nature of their reduced surface area.



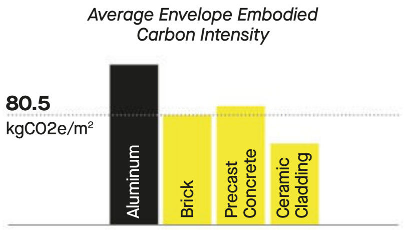
RECONSIDER GLAZING

The building’s window-to-wall ratios (WWR) are another big factor. The firm determined that keeping the WWR below 40 per cent means utilizing more solid wall assemblies than aluminum window wall systems, which are more carbon-intensive.



MAXIMIZE DENSITY

Optimizing the density of a building requires a mix of unit sizes and layout efficiency. Projects that incorporate one-, two- and three-bedroom units with compact layouts and an average size of 75.4 square metres were found to be the most effective at limiting material use and distributing embodied carbon effectively.


Average Envelope Embodied Carbon Intensity

BE SELECTIVE WITH MATERIALS

When planning the envelope, materials make a difference. Aluminum systems and glass, though popular, are currently high in embodied carbon; as production processes change and become more efficient, these numbers will reduce. Until then, opting for ceramic, brick or even precast concrete can significantly reduce a building envelope’s ECI.

PHOTO BY SCOTT WEBB; GRAPHICS COURTESY OF BDP QUADRANGLE

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Built to Last

CRAFTED WITH PRECISION, THESE THREE MASONRY OPTIONS BRING OUT THE BOLDNESS OF BRICK

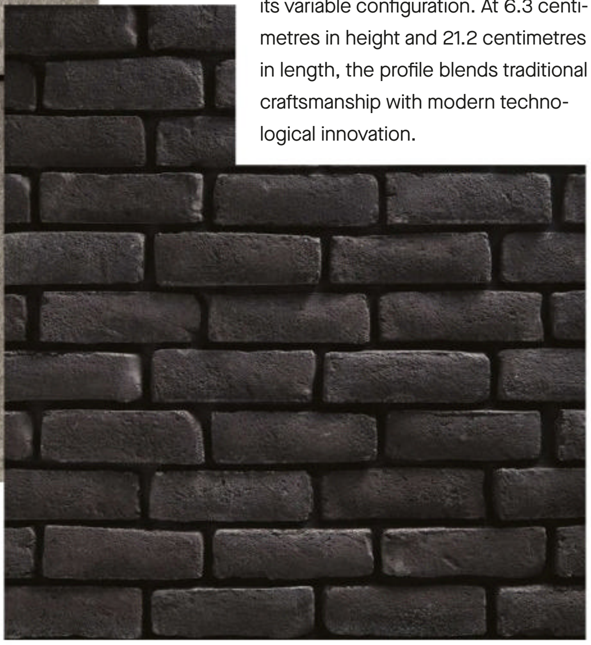
BY _Sophie Sobol

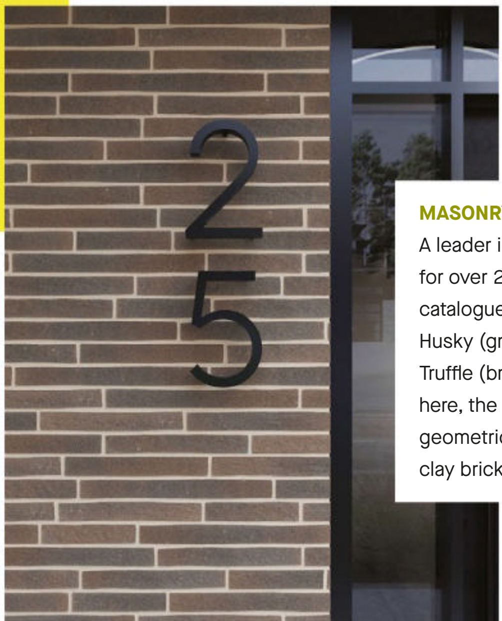
SILVER CITY SMOOTH

Brick manufacturer **Glen-Gery** introduces Silver City Smooth, a greyish-white tone, as its signature finish for 2025. Designed as part of the Emporium+ Series (alongside Black Pearl, Belgian Grey and Aspen White), this smooth-faced brick features a slight extruded edge that offers a sophisticated architectural presence. Fabricated at the Pennsylvania-based Hanley plant, the standard brick is 20.3 centimetres long by 5.7 centimetres high and 9.2 centimetres thick.

HANDFORMED BRICK

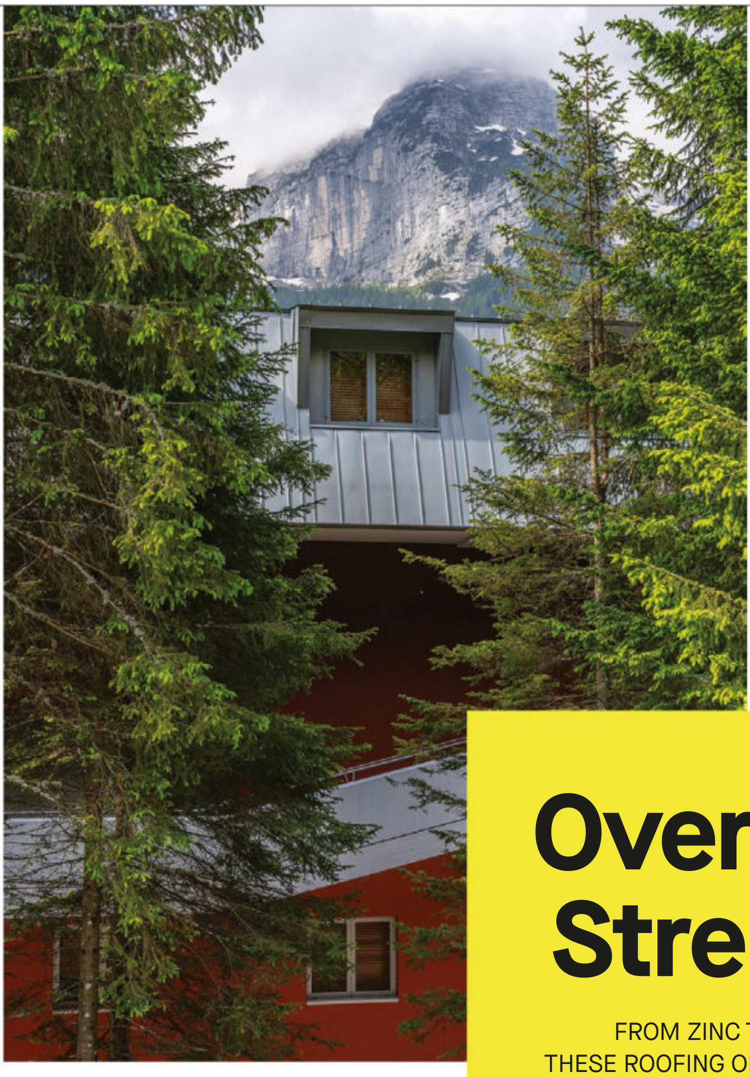
Looking for masonry with an artisanal touch? With slight variations in texture and dimension, the 2.5-centimetre-thick Handformed Bricks from **Dutch Quality Stone** have an appealing bespoke quality. Available in Quail Grey, Snowpack and Coal Crest (shown), this tumbled design moulded from authentic bricks creates a unique sense of depth with its variable configuration. At 6.3 centimetres in height and 21.2 centimetres in length, the profile blends traditional craftsmanship with modern technological innovation.





MASONRY COLLECTION

A leader in high-end, high-performance masonry products for over 25 years, Canadian brand **Rinox** recently updated its catalogue with five new dynamic colour options: Volcano (red), Husky (grey), Caviar (dark grey), Whistler (creamy white) and Truffle (brown). All are available as bricks, pavers and slabs; shown here, the Clayden brick (offered in three sizes) in Truffle mixes geometric mid-century design with the colouring of the ancient clay bricks of antiquity.



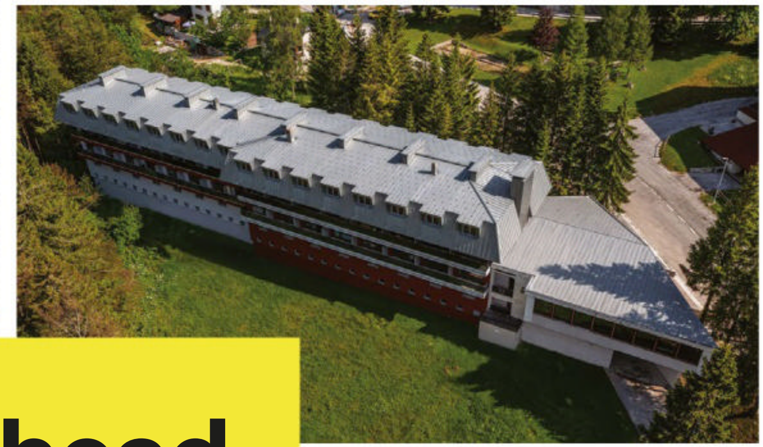
Overhead Strength

FROM ZINC TO SYNTHETIC, THESE ROOFING OPTIONS OFFER BOTH STYLE AND PEACE OF MIND

BY _Sophie Sobol

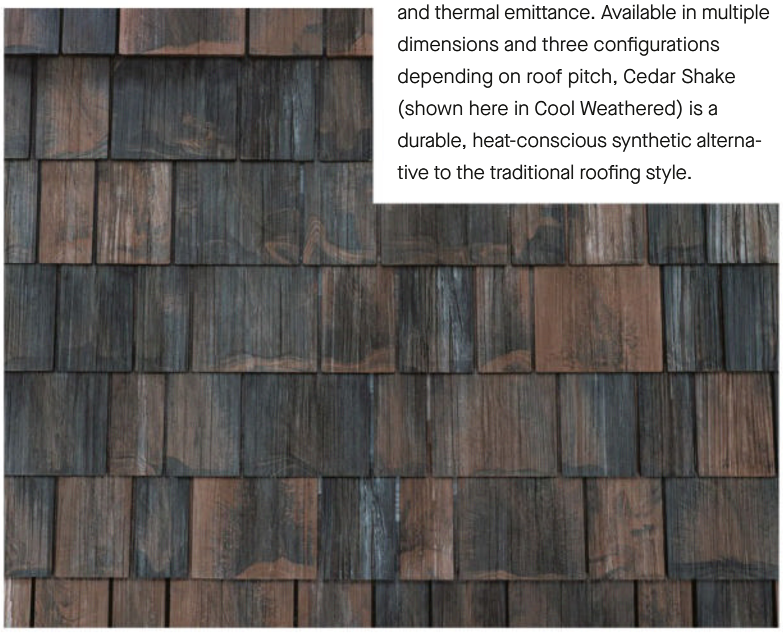
THE ZINTEK

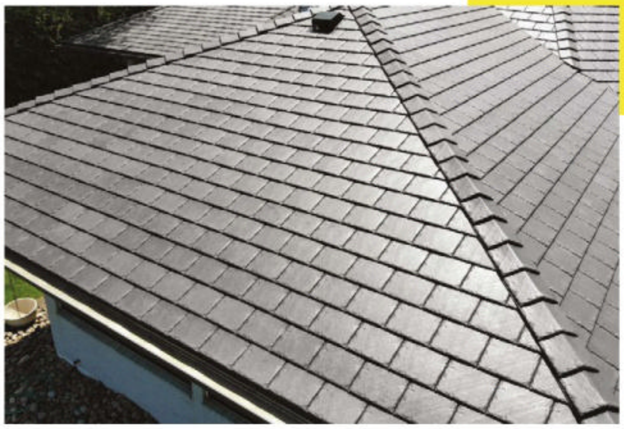
The small village of Sella Nevea in Northeast Italy is renowned for its ski slopes and rugged beauty, but winter here is no joke, and the built environment must be solid and sturdy enough to withstand the harsh climate. At the Montasio Complex — a 1970s apartment building restored by Fulvio Caputo of C and C Architettura Ingegneria — the key was upgrading the roof. Made of sheet metal and zinc-titanium laminate by **Zintek**, the ventilated roof (with snow guards and filters to protect the vents from icy particles) improves seismic resistance, bolsters thermal insulation and reduces energy consumption: The structure now consumes only 37 per cent as much as it previously did.



COOL ROOF COLORS

Brava has introduced a number of unique new colour options for its Cool Roof line of Cedar Shake (four new colours), Slate (five colours) and Spanish Barrel (two colours) roof tiles. Each tonal variation is completely distinct and creates an authentic feel thanks to the brand's patented mineral-infusion process. All Class 4 impact rated, the tiles balance interior heating and mitigate energy consumption with high solar reflectance and thermal emittance. Available in multiple dimensions and three configurations depending on roof pitch, Cedar Shake (shown here in Cool Weathered) is a durable, heat-conscious synthetic alternative to the traditional roofing style.





SYNTHETICSLATE ROOFING TILE

For Canadian synthetic roofing expert **Polysand**, durability is the watchword. Its new innovative SyntheticSlate roofing tile — a composite material made from virgin polymers and recycled filler — can withstand extreme temperatures (from -60°C to 80°C) and offers high UV protection to prevent cracking and fading. The slate (available in onyx and ash grey) is even resistant to weed and moss growth due to its lack of open pores. And at only one kilogram per tile, it is five times lighter than a slab of natural slate with the same dimensions. With an organic edge design, standard tiles are 55.8 centimetres long and 30.4 centimetres wide — with a thickness of only 1.2 centimetres.

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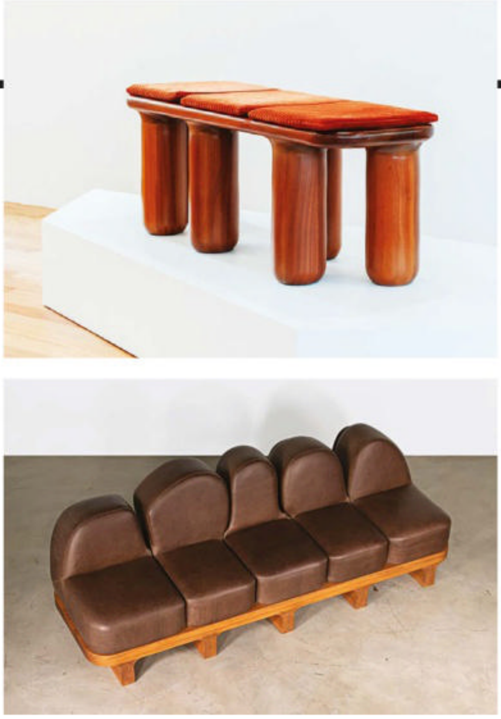
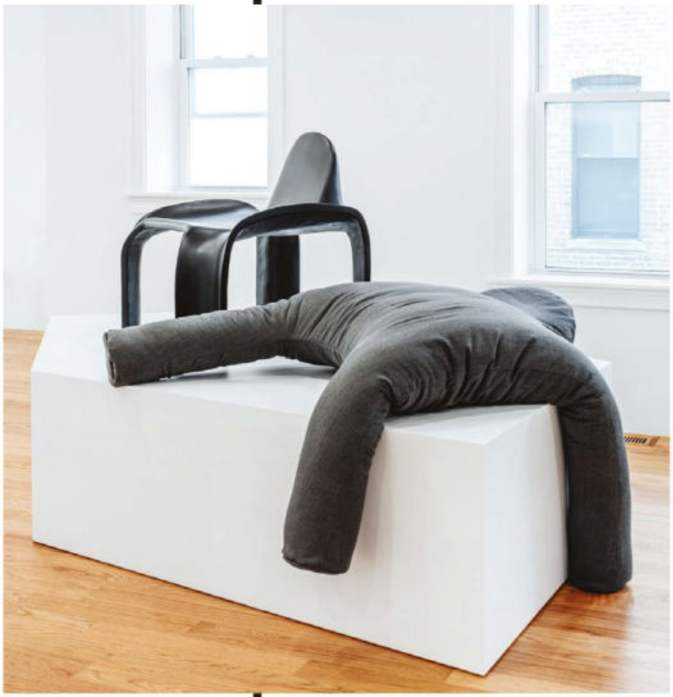
DESIGN

MOVING THE GOALPOST

SUPER BOWL CHAMPION **MICHAEL BENNETT** FINDS SUCCESS — AND INSPIRES CHANGE — IN A WHOLE NEW FIELD

INTERVIEW BY
ERIC MUTRIE





Studio Kër's 2024 exhibition "We Gotta Get Back to the Crib" (presented by Marta gallery at the Rebuild Foundation's 6 Flat in Chicago) showcased fresh takes on the African design diaspora. Cape Mantle (top) and Pews (bottom) reference elements of Black home and church life, respectively, while Gumbo (right) pairs a fibreglass lounge chair with an anthropomorphic cushion.

IN 2014, FIVE YEARS INTO HIS NFL CAREER, defensive lineman Michael Bennett became a Super Bowl XLVIII champion playing for the Seattle Seahawks. For most athletes, such an accomplishment is already a remarkable professional legacy. But Bennett's on-field aptitude (he's also a three-time Pro Bowler) stands secondary to his ongoing humanitarian work and social justice activism. In 2015, he used a press conference to speak out against a teammate's criticism of the Black Lives Matter movement. The following year, he joined fellow NFL player Colin Kaepernick by refusing to stand during "The Star-Spangled Banner" — a form of protest against police brutality and systemic racism that Bennett (then playing for the Philadelphia Eagles) continued after Kaepernick left the league. (Pushback led to a viral fake photo of Bennett burning the American flag.) In both his memoir — *Things That Make White People Uncomfortable*, published in 2018 — and the podcast *Mouthpeace*, which he hosts alongside his wife, artist Pele Bennett, he has tackled everything from concussions to over-policing. The couple also leads a food justice foundation dedicated to promoting nutrition in underserved communities.

But it turns out that all these achievements have just been the first few chapters of a much longer playbook. Since retiring from the NFL in 2020, Bennett has embarked on another career entirely: designer. After graduating from the Heritage School of Interior Design, he enrolled in an architecture degree at the University of Hawaiʻi in Honolulu, where he lives. He also established a design practice, Studio Kër, initially working alongside industrial designer Imhotep Blot, who passed away in 2023. In January 2024, Bennett unveiled his first collection in an exhibition entitled "We Gotta Get Back to the Crib." And during last December's edition of Miami Art Week, he debuted an amber glass vessel as part of a series of limited-edition works by a roster of five designers commissioned by Lexus and showcased at both Alcova Miami and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami.

On a panel that Lexus held at the ICA Miami to mark the launch, architect Germane Barnes (who also contributed to the capsule collection) praised Bennett's unique combination of star power and integrity. "You can't miss him — he towers over everyone else. And he's always going to come up and give you a great big hug every time he sees you," he said. "It takes a lot of effort to be hopeful and joyful, and Michael always starts with that. I hope that architecture and design doesn't make him jaded and that his spark stays with him, because he is a deeply caring person." In conversation with Bennett, that becomes immediately evident. Here, he talks us through the kickoff of his new career — and how it continues his ongoing mission.

PHOTOS BY MARK KUSHIMI (PORTRAIT); KEVIN SERNA (EXHIBITION)

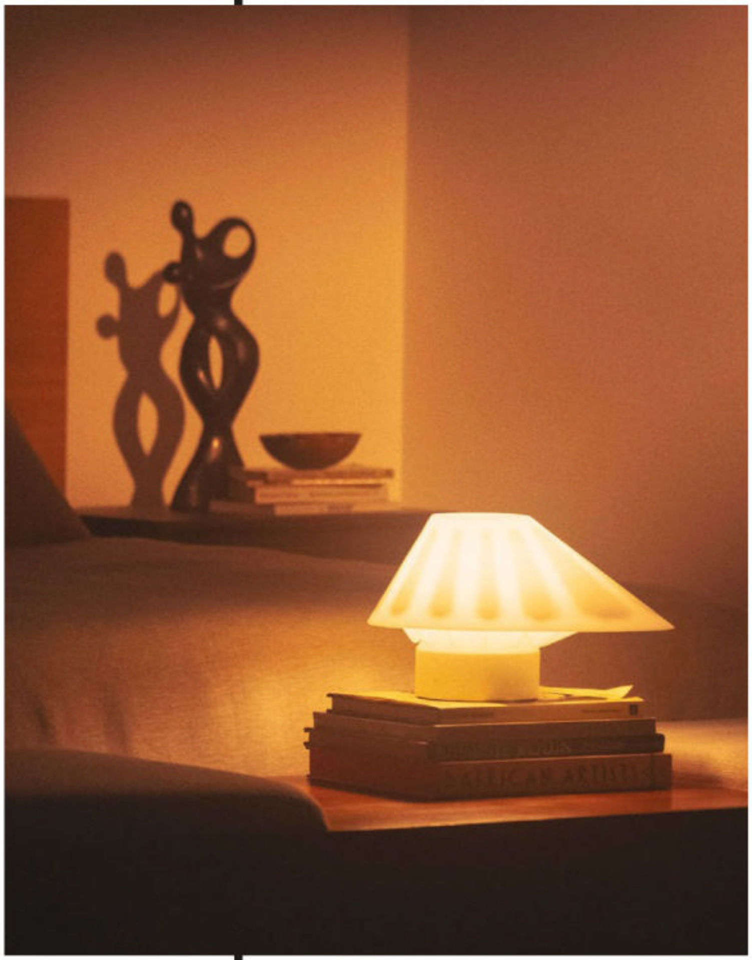
Let's start with the obvious: Football to furniture is not a conventional path. At what point did you decide that design would be your next big move?

I've always liked design. Growing up, my brother would say that I had good taste in clothes. And I still see a lot of design in athletics — there is an artistry required to play football, in terms of the architecture of the body and being able to manoeuvre it while still taking care of it. It's like a structure in itself. There's also the fact that, I know I'm not overweight, but every time I get into a chair, it breaks. The last time I was in Japan, I broke, like, three chairs. I think about the body a lot — especially the Black body, in terms of the scale and the spaces it manoeuvres through. Moving into design professionally was also motivated by my activism. After retiring from football, I was reading a lot about Booker T. Washington, who spent the late 19th century thinking about rebuilding America for the Black community. That's when I started to think about design as an act of resistance. How can we change the world? It starts with design.

You've described your work with Studio Kër as designed in "joyous opposition to the dominance of Western domestic typologies." What does that mean to you?
There's this idea that Black creativity can only come through Black pain. When I go to art exhibits, it's clear that a lot of the world wants to see Black art as, "Oh, this is what police brutality did to you." And I think there's a space for that, but it's not my space. My space is asking, "What does it feel like to grow up in a family of love? What does it feel like to have Black joy?"

Your designs reference elements of the African diaspora, and your studio takes its name from the Wolof word *kër*, which means "home" in Senegal, where your ancestors are from. Growing up in Louisiana, were you already deeply familiar with that cultural heritage, or did those references come out of research?
It's both. I pull from the religious culture of my family, and the sacred parts of growing up in the Black church in Louisiana. But the research is constant, to learn more about myself and my culture. The first time I went to Senegal, I found that it looked a lot like Louisiana — a lot of the culture was the same. Everybody in America is a descendant of somewhere else — all of us are naturalized to America, but we also have something that's pulling us back to the past. And that's what Senegal did for me — it pulled me back. As I have found out more about the history of architecture and making and materiality there, it has become this kind of bridge to the swag of being African American.

You initially partnered with Imhotep Blot, an industrial designer who passed away in early 2023. I'm so sorry for your loss. What was your dynamic with him like?
We were two people who both came from the African diaspora — me from Senegal, and him from Haiti — and who care about design and culture. There was a significant communion in the way we think about the connection between past and present through these objects that we want to live into the future. And Imhotep worked at a really dope pace. Industrial design is different from architecture, but at the same time, there are a lot of principles that stay the same. He passed away before Studio Kër could present our first collection, but that show was presented in memory of him.



Ursa Minor, a plant-based polymer lamp designed for San Francisco lighting company Gantri, pays homage to the Little Dipper — specifically, the constellation's role in guiding people through darkness to freedom.

You debuted that exhibition, "We Gotta Get Back to the Crib," in January 2024. How did you choose that title?
The collection focused on the essence of Blackness — getting back to ideas of culture, home and family. When I'm making something, I want it to be subtle and elegant, but also urgent. What I am trying to articulate through my focus on African forms is that there's this fragmented part in the history of America in that traditions from Africa were broken because of slavery. So it's trying to figure out what's left over from those fragments to build something new. I feel like a lot of times, design these days is just about observing. You just look at something, like, "Oh, that's cool." But when you sit on a chair, does it allow you to have conversations that aren't just about the chair, and are about the world at large?

Building on that, one of the standouts in the collection is the two-part Gumbo chair, which has a fibreglass frame and corresponding body pillow. How did the dish play a role in shaping the piece?
For me, design isn't so much about form leading to function or function leading to form, but narrative leading to form. When gumbo happens, it's a very communal thing — you put everything into a pot and everybody starts to share. When I retired from football, I tried to think about a word that would push me through the rest of my life and how I think moving forward — and that word was "communion." I mean that in the sense of spiritual, physical and mental gathering. That's how I want to see the world, and so everything that I've made has been about communion.

In a way, the larger mix of materials in the show also felt like a gumbo — having all these things together and allowing each of them to have their own flavour, whether that's the earthiness of stone or the warmth of wood. One of the woods that I used is African sapele wood, and I liked that it's African, but also, my wife's name is Pele, and she's like a muse to me. She's a very beautiful, intelligent individual.

The exhibition was held at the Rebuild Foundation, founded by Theaster Gates. What was it like to show there?
Theaster Gates is one of my good friends, and I like thinking about the way that he is putting things into the perspective that they were always supposed to be seen through. He looks at space in terms of both how it came to be and what it is supposed to be. It takes people plugged into the system to develop the things that they actually want to see in their cities, rather than just having someone else's desires placed upon them. The Rebuild Foundation is pivotal — it speaks to how I see the world and what I want to see exist.

What was reception to the collection like?
It's been a mixed bag. Some people think it's great and other people think that I don't deserve to be in the design world. But you've got to respect losing so that you can love

winning. It's not about fame for me; I already had that. Instead, it's about finding ways to make an impact. I'm really focused on trying to bring design and all that it has to offer into the spaces I grew up in, so that people have a better sense of what they can be. If you look at my track record politically, and what I stand for as an individual, I've never been scared to talk about what I'm supposed to be talking about. That's just who I am, so I want to continue inspiring people to change.

You established a scholarship for Black designers at the Heritage School of Interior Design, and you and Pele have also set up a $250,000 endowed fund to get more people of colour into the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). What drove those philanthropy decisions?
Again, it's about systems. RISD is one of the most important design schools, so it makes sense to create more opportunities for people to get skills from there to change their existing communities. When I started playing college football for Texas A&M, I went from seeing nothing but Black and Mexican people to only seeing white people. I became a minority super-fast, and it felt like nothing I did was appropriate. They didn't like the way I dressed; there was a coach telling me to pull my pants up. And then I realized, I can't do that. He's basically taking away what makes me *me*. I think the more diversity that we allow into those communities, the more that we'll continue to improve them.

And I think that people are hungry to learn and acquire these skill sets. When I was in Haiti a couple years back, the kids walked 10 miles to school every day. One of them had actually died trying to cross the river in the middle, so the other kids and their families had worked to get a bridge made. Nothing — not even the death of their friend — had kept those kids from getting an education and reaching their potential. It was similar in Senegal. I spent a lot of time working with girls there, and I asked them what they wanted to be. This one girl said that she wanted to become an engineer to devise a better system for ambulances, because her grandmother had died when they couldn't get an ambulance.

School gives people tools to make better worlds. That's why I make donations and give my time to these things — because I know the importance of creating an army of thinkers that build a new system. It's not just about doing the work, but about creating the space for others to do the work. Humans deserve to live in a place with clean water, education, nice parks, access to books — and seeing how people, when they have those opportunities, really rise to the occasion shows me that everyone just wants to exist in a world that's fair and righteous.

WHEN YOU SIT ON A CHAIR, DOES IT ALLOW YOU TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE WORLD AT LARGE?

What has your own experience in education at the University of Hawaiʻi been like?
It has re-energized me to be around so many young minds. I want to be humble. I know that discipline is important, because I grew up going to practice every single day. I did have to stay up until four in the morning making things. Collaboration and teamwork are also things that were already part of my skill set. I realized that no one thing is designed by just a single person — everything takes a group effort.

You created a limited-edition vessel as part of the Lexus in Design series, which also featured objects by Crafting Plastics, Germane Barnes, Suchi Reddy, and Tara Sakhi (T Sakhi), and a candle by fragrance brand Dilo. Tell me about the concept behind your design.
In America, we talk about the idea of 10,000 hours — but Lexus is built on the idea of the Japanese *takumi* master craftsman, who spends 60,000 hours devoted to their craft. In Japan, after 10,000 hours, you ain't even gone pro yet. Having spent a lot of time there, that's something I've always loved about Japan — everything has an elegance to it, even if it's just the towel folded in your room each night. There's a meditative rhythm to that repetition. I set out to capture that in a vessel made of amber glass, which became a way to reflect candle flames on a table. I think a lot about ritual: Candles are usually in a sacred space, or to try to set a mood, so I wanted something that would heighten that.

PHOTO BY JOSH RUBIN (VESSEL)

Bennett's amber glass vessel, part of a limited-edition Lexus capsule collection presented in Miami this past December, frames a candle to cast a sacred glow.

What's next?
I'm working on several projects right now — a chapel in Seattle and two houses. I've also launched a program, Building Motions, that is about bringing art into sanctuary-type secular spaces within communities of colour, and the first edition of that will be in 2025. All of it takes a lot of time — it's getting kind of hard to sleep sometimes.

When it comes to your furniture designs, have any of your old football teammates reached out to buy anything?
Romeo Okwara, Malcolm Jenkins and Quinton Jefferson have all bought pieces. A lot of my former teammates — and some people I didn't even play with — have hit me up. [*Laughs.*] It's interesting, because I hate the way that everybody in the NFL dresses, so it's about time they got some style. I think people are always surprised that I've been in these two different worlds. Even when I was in Miami for the Lexus in Design launch, some of the other people in the program were asking, "Why do people keep taking pictures with you?" and I had to explain to them, "Oh, I used to play football." I need to embrace both sides, because it shows other people that they're not stuck in something, and are able to change if they want to change. I'm 39, and I think a lot of times, people are scared to enter the creative space later on, but some people's greatest work happened after 50. **AZ**

PUBLIC HEALTH

DOCTOR'S ORDERS

BY PRESCRIBING HOUSING FOR THE CHRONICALLY UNHOUSED, A HOSPITAL-LED SOCIAL MEDICINE INITIATIVE IS PROVIDING NEW HOPE IN TORONTO — WITH HELP FROM ARCHITECTS LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL

Andrew Boozary
physician and executive director, UHN Gattuso Centre for Social Medicine

Daniel Ling and Kevin Hutchinson
principals, Montgomery Sisam

Paul Karakusevic
principal, Karakusevic Carson Architects

INTERVIEW BY
SIMON LEWSEN

PHOTO BY JAMES MORLEY/DOUBLESPACE

IN JUNE OF 2021, the University Health Network — a consortium of hospitals in downtown Toronto — announced that it was doing something health organizations rarely do: building homes for high-needs patients. Last October, the UHN, in partnership with the United Way Greater Toronto, opened Dunn House, a complex of 51 single-occupancy units financed by various levels of government, operated by the charity Fred Victor and sited on a hospital-owned parking lot in the city's Parkdale neighbourhood. The units are being offered on a rent-geared-to-income basis, and the building itself was designed by Montgomery Sisam Architects, a blue chip firm that has been carving out a niche in supportive housing for unhoused people. (Full disclosure: MSA is working on the expansion of Innis College at the University of Toronto, where I teach. It also designed the home I grew up in.)

But UHN isn't done. Last summer, the network announced a fellowship whereby renowned architects and advocates would develop solutions to the city's housing crisis. I recently spoke about these initiatives with Andrew Boozary, a physician and the executive director of UHN's Gattuso Centre for Social Medicine; Daniel Ling and Kevin Hutchinson, both principals at MSA; and Paul Karakusevic, one of the inaugural Social Medicine Housing Fellows, whose U.K. firm, Karakusevic Carson Architects, has designed public housing complexes for both London and Toronto.

Andrew, in an op-ed for the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, you mention that Canadian hospitals — in Guelph and Edmonton, and now Toronto — have been building housing. Why?

ANDREW BOOZARY: What else would you have health workers do? The housing crisis is a health crisis. People who are chronically unhoused live half as long as others. When a patient's major concern is where they're going to sleep at night, it's hard for them to follow a medication regimen. With chronic conditions like cardiovascular disease or diabetes, tragic outcomes — from amputations to heart attacks to strokes — are far too common. People who are unhoused are in hospital two to three times longer than other patients. There's a revolving door of people coming in and out of emergency departments because they have nowhere else to go. Our downtown hospitals are at 105 to 120 per cent occupancy. And there's no pathway for humane discharge.

I guess, for hospital workers, the alternative to building housing is simply living with the moral distress of discharging people onto the streets, which runs contrary to the rehabilitative mission of healthcare. There's also the issue of money, though. At a certain point, when you have individuals constantly returning to the ER, is it actually cheaper to build housing for them?

AB: It costs the system over $30,000 a month when an individual is admitted to any downtown hospital. It's around $13,000 a month in the prison system, which has become the de facto mental health system. People ask, "Can you afford Dunn House?" My answer is, "We can't afford the status quo." But the issue is not just one of health economics. It's one of life expectancy. If there was a drug that could stop people from losing 20 to 30 years, you'd hope that every policy-maker, funder and investor would be racing to pay for it.

Dunn House has single-occupancy units for 51 people. How did you decide who gets to live there?

AB: Using hospital data, we identified individuals who have high medical risks, high numbers of total visits to the ER or high numbers of days in a hospital bed. We also looked at how long people have been unhoused. There's no perfect algorithm. What's unique about Dunn House, though, is that it's a permanent solution. It's not transitional housing where, after 60 days, people are discharged onto the street.

Dunn House was created via modular construction. Daniel and Kevin, can you explain that process?

DANIEL LING: With modular construction, you're building whole boxes — with interiors, windows and most of the cladding — off site in a factory. You then bring the boxes, almost fully complete, to the construction site for assembly. Dunn House has identical 275-square-foot studio units. Buildings like that, with lots of repetition, are best suited for modular construction.

The big advantage is that modular construction is fast, right?

DL: It has two advantages. One is speed. You can do much of the on-site and factory work in parallel. The final assembly, then, might be completed within weeks. When modular construction goes smoothly, we can get an entire building done in nine to 12 months, as opposed to 20 months. The second advantage is the lower carbon footprint. Factory fabrication reduces waste, particularly when it comes to transport. You're only trucking the final product to site, not the other materials.

KEVIN HUTCHINSON: We have a diminishing workforce available to us. We're seeing smaller construction crews on sites in general. With modular construction, you can find workforce efficiencies. For example, if you're installing plumbing in a washroom on site, you're on a ladder up in the ceiling. But in a factory, you're lifted on dollies, so you're sitting in a chair comfortably working at chest height. A factory setting is more attractive to the labour force. It's a more climate-controlled, technologically enhanced environment.

In modular design, repetition is a virtue. But, presumably, you still want some degree of variation in the architecture. How do you achieve that?

DL: In the Durham Modular Transitional Housing project [a suite of modular homes for unhoused people in the town of Beaverton, Ontario], we had 47 units and three storeys. For much of the building, we leaned into the repetition. In the middle, though, there's a cut-out where we used two shorter modules, creating a forecourt for the entry. We weren't doing anything complex. We were just saying, "Let's put a bunch of shorter units here to create a cut-out. And let's line the inside of the cut-out with wood to have a contrast to the dark siding." To create a community hub, we put a smaller building in the front of the residential section, and we gave that building a distinctive roof shape. We were being selective. We were allowing repetition, but also introducing moments of variety to create contrast.

KH: At Dunn House, the length of the building is shorter than at Durham. So naturally, we have less repetition. And the repetition we do have is quite nice.

Tell me about the healthcare amenities at Dunn House.

AB: Each individual has their own bed and bathroom. The building is pet-inclusive. And there are embedded healthcare supports that have not been standard for supportive housing. As a physician, I'm at Dunn House every Monday, offering primary care. There are also community health workers and caseworkers. A colleague of mine, Vicky Stergiopoulos, has a weekly clinic addressing mental health needs. And we have access to the UHN virtual emergency department.

In addition to Dunn House, the UHN has created a housing fellowship. What questions are the fellows looking to answer?
AB: One is "Where are the opportunities to scale up? How can we make the model more accessible, so that cities customize it for their own patient populations or neighbourhoods?" It's important to build up a cadre of design and architecture expertise. The second question is "What should housing look like for people who have high health needs, high degrees of social deprivation, and mistrust of the health system?"

Would you like to see a future in which housing is understood as a core part of a hospital's mandate?
AB: Yes and no. I would love to not have the housing crisis being managed through the emergency department. And I would like to see both the public and private sectors do the work of delivering housing. At the UHN, we don't want to engage in hospital overreach. We want to see more collaboration. We prefer to work with other institutions as partners rather than taking on housing ourselves.

Paul, in your professional experience, what are the best practices for building social housing?
PAUL KARAKUSEVIC: At our firm, we're trying to make housing that is dignified and durable, where people can live their best lives. We have to do that on a budget that's two-thirds of the private sector's budget. That's where having a good pencil and a good drawing hand is useful. We can't make things that are flamboyant, but we can make things that are beautiful, elegant and built to last hundreds of years.

You're alluding to a tension between economics and aesthetics. You don't want to design buildings that look cheap. But you do need to be thrifty, right?
PK: We try to make the plans of the building simple, and we try to think about the experience of residents. Everyone should feel dignified, safe and secure, warm in winter and not too hot in summer. Materiality is key. Georgian buildings from 300 years ago are still standing. There's no reason why the new housing we're building shouldn't be standing in 300-plus years.

But how do you do this kind of work economically?
PK: In London, we've gotten value for money by giving the public sector the support they need to manage the process all the way through. In the past 20 to 30 years, a lot of the public sector has been de-skilled, and it has not had the capability to manage projects. Instead, it has brought on private-sector partners — who want a big piece of the pie — at an early stage in the project. If the public sector manages projects themselves, they don't have to scrimp later on materials or process specifications.

Your firm also thinks carefully about using floor plates to maximize the number of dwellings.
PK: Yes, because land is finite. We have to make the most with what we have, which means working hard to come up with intelligent spatial planning.
KH: In order to get more value out of sites, you have to break rules. For some sites, you need to under-provide on setbacks and maybe have a different building configuration. In Montgomery Sisam's forthcoming Kensington Market project [a suite of supportive modular housing units on a parking lot in a storied Toronto neighbourhood], we have an L-shaped courtyard building with two narrow edges toward the street, instead of a traditional street wall. Zoning would have hated that, right? But we were able to achieve a great number of additional units because of an atypical built form.
PK: When we began working with Toronto, we started by asking planners about their favourite cities and streets around the world. As it turns out, those very cities and streets broke a lot of the planning rules in Toronto. I understand that, in Toronto, you have a different climate, so I see the need for zoning and coding. But these measures kill creativity. If you have too much blanket zoning, it can lead to dull cities and lost opportunities. When Dunn House was being designed, somebody could have drawn a big rectangle around the property and said, "This is hospital land. And it can only be hospital land." Well, actually, there's a parking lot there. It's underutilized land in the middle of a housing crisis. So let's negotiate around the rules. I like this tension. It leads to interesting cities that evolve quickly.

> WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT DUNN HOUSE IS THAT IT'S A PERMANENT SOLUTION. IT'S NOT TRANSITIONAL HOUSING WHERE, AFTER 60 DAYS, PEOPLE ARE DISCHARGED ONTO THE STREET.

On the topic of speed, let's talk about the "rapid" part of "rapid housing." How do we build houses faster?
PK: I'm not bashing planners, but the approvals process can be bureaucratic. When you're dealing with public or City land, the sign-off process for contracts and tenders can be slow. We can all design faster than planners can plan.
KH: The City of Toronto has been evolving its approach. The new "city-builder" process [a program by which the City steps in to develop affordable housing] is interesting, because it has taken rezoning out of the equation. A lot of the engineering reports that require time to prepare, review and revise are now no longer needed at the rezoning stage and are downloaded to the site plan application process instead.

There's a prevailing sense, particularly in North America, that architecture is an elite indulgence. Make the case to me that housing for unhoused people is actually a job for architects.
PK: A lot of the modern housing from the '60s and '70s was builder- and engineer-led, as opposed to architect-led. First, you had the original Unité d'habitation [a classic residential housing typology designed by Swiss French architect Le Corbusier]. But then, around the world, the construction lobby went, "Wow, we can make a lot of money by imitating — badly — Le Corbusier's high-density mass-housing ideas while editing out all the design qualities." So all of Le Corbusier's generosity gets stripped out, not by architects but by the construction industry. Decades later, the buildings get torn down. And who do we all blame? Architects!

This time around, the work has to be architect-led, with a focus on quality. Often I say, "Build a bit less, but make it good." That way, when people see new buildings, they go, "Wow, new can be great." I worry that, if there's a rush for numbers, the architects will get squeezed, the industry will take over and we'll end up repeating the mistakes of the '60s and '70s, which would be tragic. Tearing down buildings that are only 40 or 50 years old is the definition of insanity.
DL: Charles and Ray Eames aimed, according to their motto, "to make the best for the most for the least," meaning the best design for the most people for the least cost. If we can take this same attitude when delivering housing, we have a shot at making a real difference as designers and city-builders. AZ

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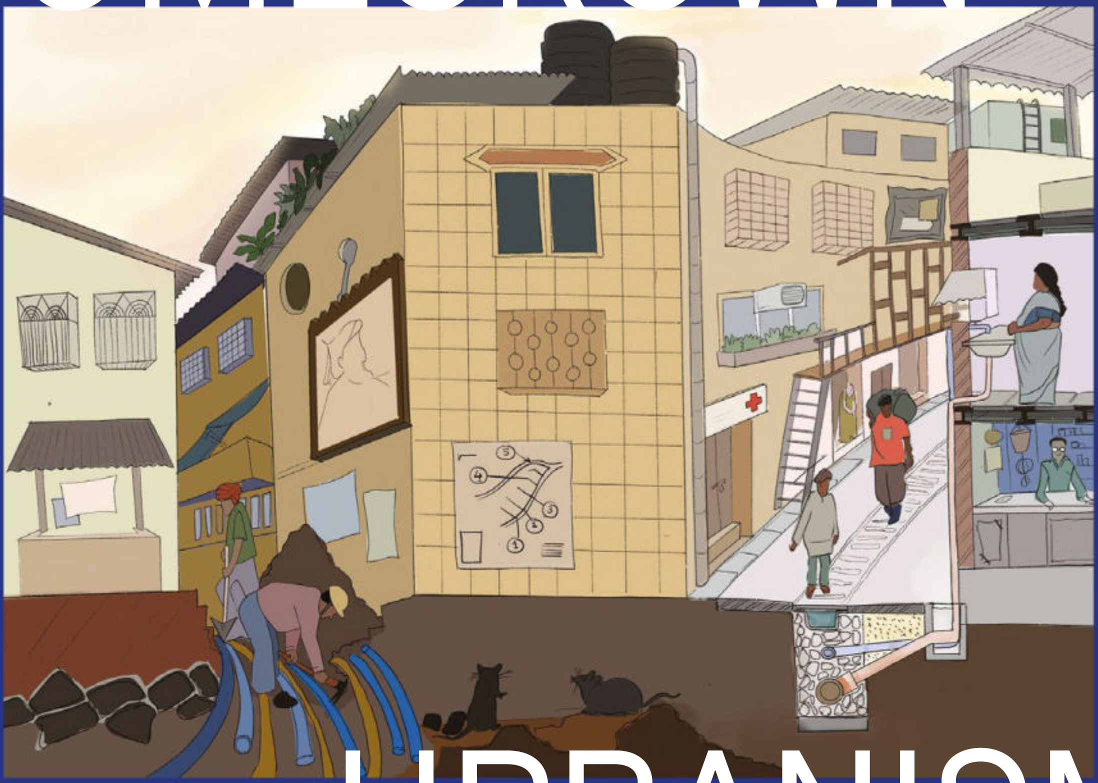
IN MUMBAI, THE DHARAVI KOLIWADA — AND LOCAL PRACTICE **URBZ** — ARE CO-CREATING A RADICALLY GRASSROOTS AND "USER-GENERATED" MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT

CITY-BUILDING

HOMEGROWN URBANISM



INTERVIEW BY
STEFAN NOVAKOVIC

WEEKS AHEAD OF OUR CALL, I try to bridge the 12,000-kilometre distance and learn as much as possible yet keep an open mind. The Internet makes it hard. When I Google "Dharavi," autocomplete immediately adds "slum" — a word that appears 11 times on the first page, even though I reject the addition. Maybe I shouldn't be surprised. After all, the Mumbai district is among the world's largest unplanned settlements, with an estimated million residents. While the scale is almost unprecedented, the density is broken up into surprisingly intimate milieux and intricate hyper-local economies.

LEFT: The ambitious water sanitation project employs a network of shallow trenches to supply the Koliwada with clean, reliable water, protecting the neighbourhood from demolition.

Dharavi's oldest neighbourhood is a case in point. Built as a fishing village by the region's Indigenous Koli people centuries before Portuguese colonialism, the Dharavi Koliwada remains home to nearly 700 households — including some 370 Koli families — as well as Urbz, an interdisciplinary practice founded in the Koliwada in 2008. The studio operates at the intersection of public governance and community engagement, mediating between communities and the bureaucracies of planning and design. In India, the gaps can be particularly stark, leaving little room for local, grassroots urbanism amid top-down waves of demolition and redevelopment.

Dharavi risks following the same pattern. In January, the local government approved the first phase of a US$3 billion developer project slated to transform 240 hectares. Since 2008, however, Urbz and Koliwada residents have gradually nurtured a radically different praxis, hosting community conversations exploring "user-centric" urbanism. In 2023, their ambitions took a step forward via a grant from the Re:arc Institute, a Copenhagen-based architectural non-profit that supports grassroots solutions for culturally and ecologically sustainable development. In the Dharavi Koliwada, their funding is facilitating the village's evolution, which ranges from a co-working and study space to new street lighting and sanitation infrastructure — projects facilitated by Urbz partners Kareena Kochery and Samidha Patil, who joined me via Zoom in late 2024.

I can hear the busy din of evening traffic behind you. Tell me about Dharavi and the Koliwada.

KAREENA KOCHERY: The Koliwada was the seed around which Dharavi grew. It's existed for centuries, and in a way, both the village and the larger community predate Mumbai as we know it. At the same time, it's a place deeply shaped by its colonial past, when industries and activities that were considered polluting or "unclean" were pushed out of the fortified city, which forced a lot of artisanal communities — like Chamar leather-workers — to relocate here. Dharavi has a long history as a refuge for historically marginalized communities.

The area was primarily marshlands, and much of Dharavi was built out organically on reclaimed land, with the community's discarded waste and refuse eventually anchored by the mangrove roots growing around it, creating a solid base for construction — and building techniques still used to this day emerged from this landscape. Yet it's still thought of as a "slum," and one famously described as the largest in the world.

SAMIDHA PATIL: The government and the urban planning regulations formally categorized it as a slum until 2014. After years of community protest and activism, they finally removed the tag. But changing the perception is a different challenge.

Urbz partners Samidha Patil (left) and Kareena Kochery are leading efforts to foster community-driven urban change in Dharavi.

When a community is branded a slum, it becomes easy to erase the complexity of its history, culture and economy, and ultimately to demolish and redevelop it all. Hopefully that attitude is changing, but it presents a new type of challenge: How does an unplanned community meet regulatory bureaucracy and modern urban planning?

SP: It's a challenge. Kareena and I both trained as architects, and we were both disillusioned by it — which I think is ultimately how both of us ended up at Urbz. My background was actually working for the companies engaged in so-called "slum redevelopment." It quickly became apparent to me that what we were building didn't reflect community needs. For starters, the small apartments weren't livable for the average Indian family of five. It falls under the umbrella of real estate development, rather than thinking of housing as a community need that exists as part of a social entity.

KK: I was also let down with the limitations of architectural practice. When I did my master's, I decided to focus on landscape architecture instead, which opened me up to the field of cultural geography and a broader way of understanding our built environments. We don't use the word "slum"; we call it a homegrown neighbourhood. But Samidha's perspective is really distinct. Her family is Koli, although from a different village — and her parents and grandparents experienced eviction. They were displaced from their home.

That must've been awful, Samidha. Is it something you're comfortable talking about?

SP: Well, it happened before I was born, when my mother was in her teens. But what I know is that it was a huge shift. We were a fishing community highly dependent on water, and it was a way of life that also necessitated access to boat storage and fishing equipment. In the off-season, the same spaces were then used for drying fish, as well as boat repair and maintenance. And these liminal spaces — the semi-public "verandas" between houses — were cultural spaces as well: They were sites of festivities and celebrations.

That all disappeared. When my family was moved into an apartment, there was an immediate space crunch, and a loss of cultural and economic livelihood. And you can trace that loss to the change of typology from a small hut to an apartment building. This happened to a lot of people. For example, some fishing communities moved into the distillation of alcohol — at the time considered a major taboo — which pushed them further into stigma and poverty, while networks of vernacular artisanal education also disappeared. But the Dharavi Koliwada is still here, and even though most people are no longer employed as fishermen (many now work in construction and building trades), the community connections remain.

Modernist planning doctrine imagines a divide between public and private space, but you've

Engagement with neighbours and community members is key to Urbz's philosophy — and aided by legible drawings and models.

described a much more fluid spectrum of activity. It requires a different type of vocabulary.

KK: To this day, that type of distinction between public and private space doesn't really exist in Dharavi, and particularly in the Koliwada. People are getting haircuts in the street, cleaning rice, all sorts of activities that might otherwise be deemed to belong to the "private" realm. In many planned neighbourhoods, however, public life is largely limited to leisure — to recreation and maybe shopping.

It's rare to talk to practitioners so directly embedded in their communities. How does this translate into your work in the Koliwada?

SP: It feels quite natural at this point, because we've been here for 15 years. The community is organized by a self-governing local body, the Koli Jamat Trust, and they've already come up with ideas for projects to improve local life. We've been working closely with the Koli Jamat to co-design and build small-scale individual building projects, like the redevelopment of the Koli Jamat Hall [a four-storey community hub combining offices for local leaders with a dedicated space for events, meetings and celebration, as well as ground-floor restaurants and shops]. Right now, one of the biggest priorities is to rethink the water sanitation network for the whole of the Koliwada — a long-standing initiative that started before we received support from Re:arc.

The government never provided public water infrastructure for the village, so people ended up doing it for themselves in an ad hoc way. Basically, they'd build their own pipelines and connect them to the public water main that runs closest to the village. It more or less worked for a while. Now, as the village grows in population and gets busier and demand for water increases, there are too many pipelines — some get barely a trickle. And wherever there's a leakage, it increases the risk for contamination and threatens public health. So there's a need to rethink the whole system. At the same time, installing a conventional public sanitation project would more or less entail demolishing the entire village.

It's a really striking example of the impasse between state power — and its expression through urban planning — and the community. It's presented as a seeming binary: Either the village is preserved but perpetual problems with sanitation remain, or it's demolished in exchange for clean water. How do you find a middle ground?

Artisan Abbas Galwani (top) is working with Urbz to revitalize a colonial building as a community hub, complete with a traditional pot tile roof.

KK: This is the core of our mission at Urbz. We see ourselves as bridging the gap between architecture and planning and community agency. And we try to be cognizant of that in everything we do. Fortunately, there are alternatives to a top-down way of doing things.

SP: With the water sanitation project, for example, we've looked at case studies around the world — including in Brazil, Pakistan and Japan — implementing shallow water infrastructure in dense urban settings. There are particularly good precedents across Latin America, where infrastructure has been designed and engineered to fit into tight spaces — and where digging deep underground isn't possible.

KK: Across the Koliwada, we undertook a study of all the lanes to understand where the narrowest points are so we can plan out a new water system. We're also working closely with the Koli Jamat to figure out phasing, implementation, and how we can bring the entire community on board. Of course, it's a massive project, and one that we can't undertake by ourselves. With the funding we've received from Re:arc, however, we're committed to building a prototype and then looking at how it can be developed — and we're supporting the Koli Jamat, who are in conversation with municipal authorities to get funding for the project.

Urbz has been a presence in the Dharavi Koliwada for a long time, which obviously helps establish rapport and trust with the community. Beyond a tangible and continued presence, how do you build and maintain community trust?

SP: Oftentimes, we are building on community priorities that already exist, so we listen and learn and work from there. We're consciously not thinking about — or talking about — our work in a traditional planning context. There's no "master plan," because that imposes a top-down way of thinking. We work with the community to identify current needs and future needs. It's development without a formal plan.

WE SEE OURSELVES AS BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING AND COMMUNITY AGENCY. AND WE TRY TO BE COGNIZANT OF THAT IN EVERYTHING WE DO.

ABOVE: A solar lighting project is illuminating the Koliwada's dark, cramped lanes — while introducing a bold placemaking gesture.

Our visual communication style is also very deliberate. The drawings that we produce of our projects don't come from an architectural language of communication — we're trying to remove those layers of abstraction and the sense of distance as a viewer. And our own team is very multidisciplinary. Our co-founders, Rahul Srivastava and Matias Echanove, didn't study architecture, so we try not to operate within that kind of vocabulary. [The Urbz team in Mumbai also includes Bharat Gangurde and Jai Bhadgaonkar.]

KK: Sometimes, when we initiate a project, we find that we haven't earned full trust. For example, when we proposed an improved fish market for the Koliwada — which responds to a need that exists in the community — we hadn't yet done enough work with the Fisher Women's Association to gain their trust. But then a need to create a dedicated study and co-working space for students emerged out of those conversations, so we've started working on that. There's a dilapidated British colonial customs house that was in ruin, and they transferred ownership to the Koli Jamat. So we're working on creating the new study space there.

Tell me about your approach to working within a colonial built context. How do you reimagine a British building for the 21st-century Koliwada?

KK: Thanks to our Re:arc funding, we're collaborating with local artisans to reintroduce vernacular architecture to the building. We're working with Abbas Galwani, an artisan from the Dharavi Kumbharwada [which was traditionally a Gujarati potters' village] to optimize traditional pot tiles — which are made as pots on a wheel and then cut in half — to fit the building. He's hand-making about 15,000 new tiles.

SP: The roof tiles on the building now were designed by the Portuguese when they colonized this part of the world, and then they were optimized by the British. They even call them Mangalore tiles, so people think they are local. But the pot tiles that we're exploring now are a true local vernacular — and one that supports local artisans.

When I think about the value of traditional architecture, the preservation of heritage and history is what comes to mind. And while that's a valuable goal in itself, this project also situates vernacular within the context of a cultural economy.

KK: Absolutely. And in that sense, a lot of the best projects tend to "emerge" in response to how people live. Re:arc has been really good to work with in this respect, offering a lot of flexibility with their grant funding. In our conversations with community members, lighting for the Koliwada has emerged as another priority, and even though it wasn't part of our initial pitch to Re:arc, it's a project we're fortunate to have support for now.

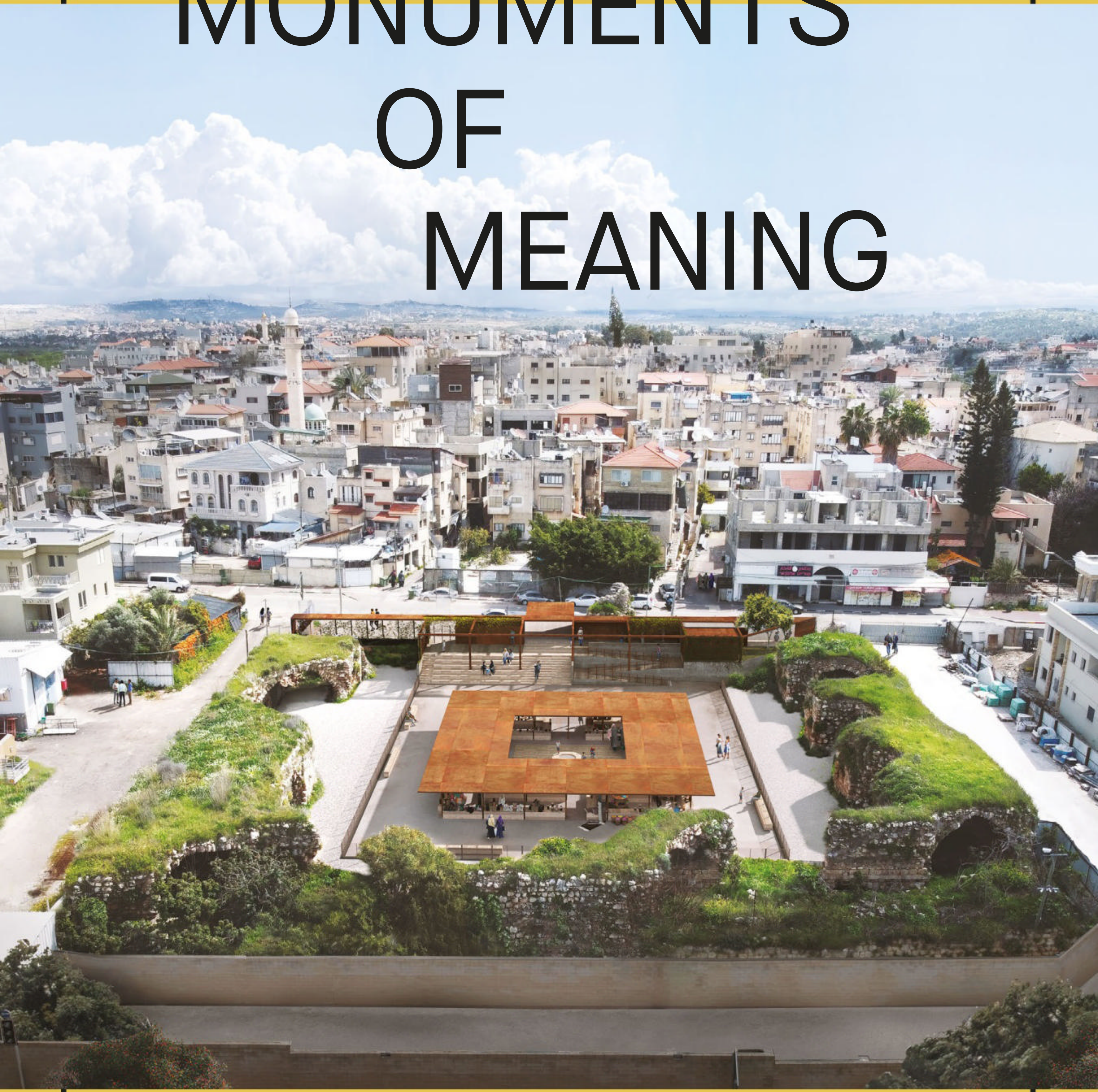
SP: It's something that community members have been suggesting to us. The lanes are so narrow and tightly packed, so the Koliwada is very dark. You end up with some alleys that are so overbuilt that it feels like an arcade. At the same time, there's a lack of a distinct architectural identity for the neighbourhood, and a real desire to express a sense of place. Lighting is a way to do that.

We recently finished a pilot where we installed some solar-powered lights. And now, with the help of local electricians from the Koliwada and a group of NYU Abu Dhabi engineering students, we're studying ways to place solar panels around the neighbourhood, which is a challenge because space is quite limited.

KK: A remarkable thing about the project is how it was all installed and managed — and ultimately led — by community members. We just facilitated the technology, and people went around figuring out locations that need lights and working with us on how to install them. Things just need a spark. We did a lighting installation, and someone came up to us and said, "This is great. Can you do it in my lane?" And then they take us to their home and tell us about the problem. **AZ**

HERITAGE

MONUMENTS OF MEANING



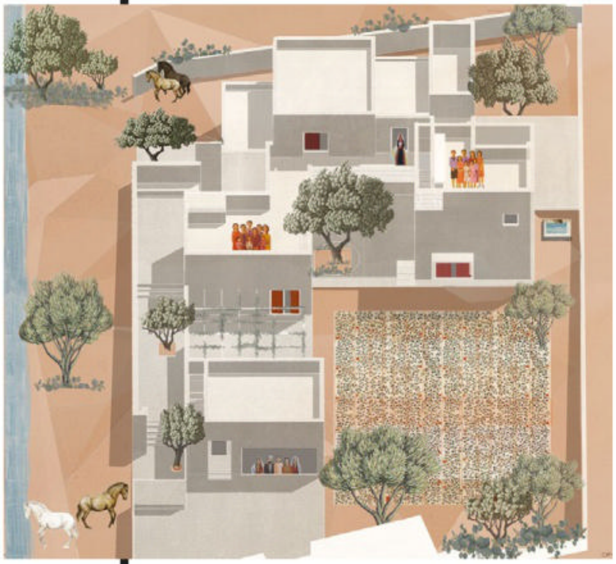
ARCHITECTS **ELIAS KHURI** AND **AZIZA CHAOUNI** DISCUSS THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING ARAB HERITAGE SITES — WHILE ALSO IMAGINING NEW POSSIBILITIES

Architect Elias Khuri revived the inner courtyard and semi-ruined eastern section of the Khan of Jaljulia, built between 1312 and 1340. The new structure employs an abstract grid of columns, recovered from the original volumes, that invokes the colonnaded courtyards of Arab mosques.

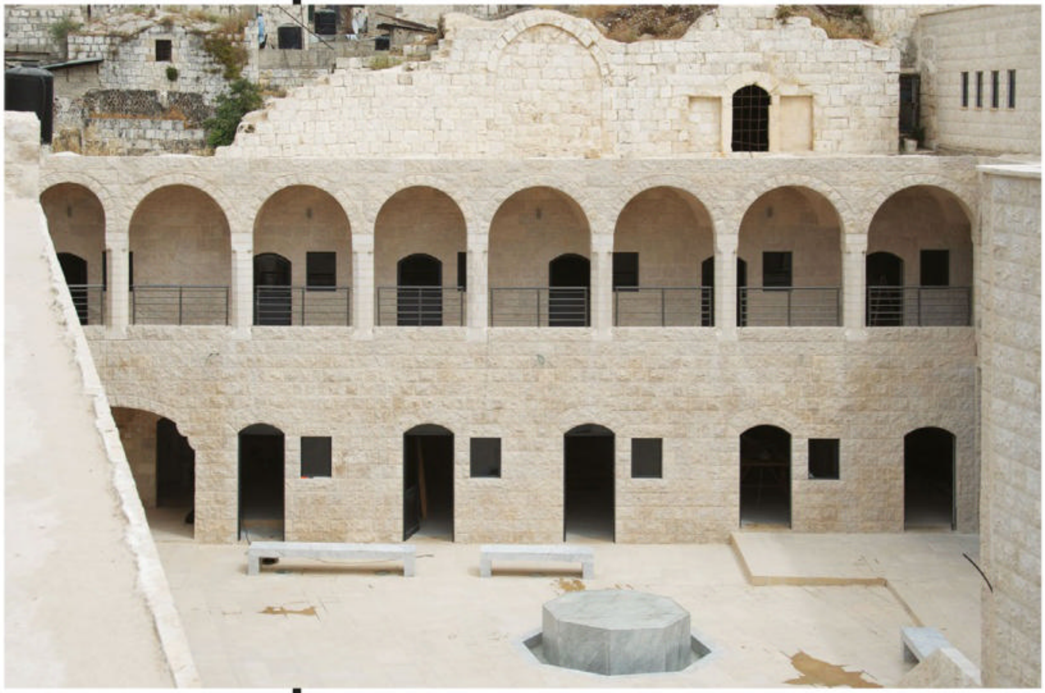
IN JANUARY 2025, the World Monuments Fund placed "Gaza Historic Urban Fabric, Palestine" on its Watch. The inclusion of the region's already damaged or imperilled heritage sites — such as Great Omari Mosque, Qasr al-Basha and Souq Al-Qaisariya — was concurrent with the United Nations' statement that 92 per cent of homes and 69 per cent of all structures in Gaza had been destroyed or damaged during the Israeli military's bombing campaign over the preceding 15 months, which was triggered by Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7th, 2023. While it was part of a longer list, one that also included the moon, the WMF's announcement belatedly put into focus the need to preserve Palestinian architectural identity.

Based in Haifa (with a remote presence in Italy), Palestinian architect Elias Khuri has long worked to restore sites with historic and cultural significance in Arab villages — places including the Khan of al-Wakalah and both the Abul-Awn mosque and the Khan in Jaljulia. At the same time, he has been designing private residences — the remarkable 12 Olive Trees House among them — that propose an ambitious future for Palestinian architecture even under conditions where building anything at all requires great perseverance, as Khuri and Aziza Chaouni discuss in this conversation, which took place over Zoom in January 2025.

An architecture professor at the University of Toronto's Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Design and Landscape, Chaouni is a renowned practitioner trained as an engineer who has been at the forefront of many projects in the Global South that take an activist approach to preservation and context-specific new builds. Her works in her home country of Morocco alone include the rehabilitation and reactivation of such mid-century modern treasures as the legendary Sidi Harazem Thermal Bath in Fez (with help from the Getty Foundation), the *ex novo* creation of the Joudour Sahara Cultural Centre in the town of M'hamid El Ghizlane and an anti-seismic earth-brick house prototype, developed after the September 2023 earthquake.



LEFT: An illustration of 12 Olive Trees House shows how the architecture was orchestrated to protect the trees and showcase them throughout the home.



BELOW: The Khan al-Wakalah was built in the early 17th century out of local Nablus stone. After its restoration, Elias Khuri and Davide Pagliarini were brought on to design the courtyard, paving and new openings; they used readily available Carrara marble for the public furniture.

AZIZA CHAOUNI: I want to start by saying that the work you are doing, Elias in rehabilitating and rethinking Palestinian built heritage is extremely important in this very moment, given everything that Gaza has experienced in the past year and a half. Architecture is, in essence, a political act — and we cannot divorce your work from what is currently occurring in the region.

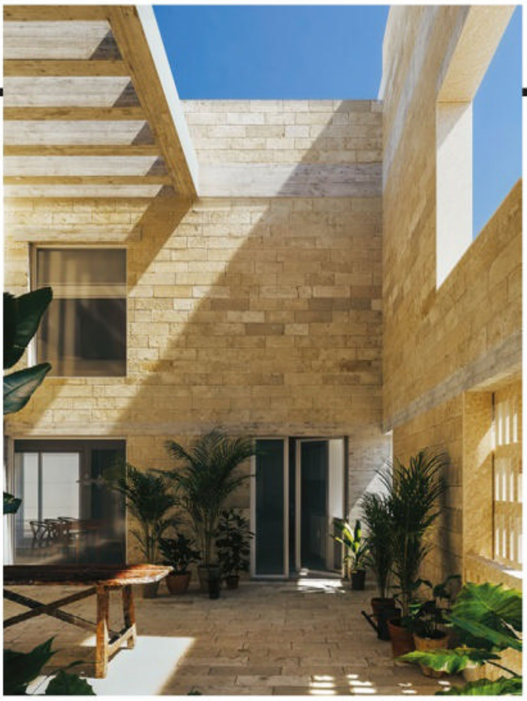
ELIAS KHURI: Thank you very much. Really, for me, it's very hard to speak about architecture. [*Long pause.*] You know, I feel like it's a kind of crime when I still make architecture, because with architecture, you have to look for beauty. And you feel that you are doing something of a crime when you are seeking beauty with intention in a time of war. Ever since the war began, it has been so hard to concentrate, to make projects. You have to feel like yourself but you cannot. You cannot concentrate. You feel...[*in Italian*] *muto, che non puoi parlare* ["mute, as if you cannot speak"].

And we need to be able to speak...Also, the problem of our culture and of all our Arab architecture is that we are all fragmented. I can't go to Lebanon, even though it is one hour from me. If you don't know your culture, you can't create an architectural identity. I can't go to Morocco; I can't go to Syria. I met with one friend in Jordan, who studied architecture in Lebanon, and he was telling me, "Elias, you have to go to the villages of Lebanon to learn how to really make architecture," but I can't. I can't make architecture if I don't meet the people and don't know the rest of my architecture. In Palestine, we are fragmented and divided in ethnic villages — since the beginning. When you are divided, you are not entire.

AC: In this context, one cannot help but question if architecture as a discipline can play a relevant role in a crisis like what Palestine or other places experiencing trauma are encountering.

In the early fall of 2023, I started to teach a seminar on heritage preservation entitled Design for the 99%, in collaboration with Riwaq [a Palestinian not-for-profit that documents and preserves architectural heritage]. We were working on small ruins outside of Jerusalem. After October 7, I couldn't get in touch with Riwaq for some time. When I was finally able to reach our collaborators there, they were in distress — but they urged us to continue the exercise. Students reached out to the Palestinian diaspora in Canada and abroad to better comprehend and discuss the challenges facing the site and its potential futures. The Riwaq team was present during the final review online and it was a very emotional, touching moment. It was a profound lesson for us all: Even in the darkest of times, we architects can play a humble role.

EK: I'm *d'accordo* ["in agreement"] with how they told you to continue. What I understand, what is clear in this period, is that there is nothing clear. This time that we are living through is full of so many radical changes that we don't know how things will go ahead. But for me, the young students are the best future. They are so different and so clever. The Palestinian people, they know how to move, how to use technology, the media. This whole time, we thought the West would help us, but in the end, we have to help ourselves. So I think we have to fight with small things. For me, I don't know how to fight except to do architecture and to protect our identity. And not just to protect our identity: When I made the 12 Olive Trees House, I wanted to protect the landscape and the olive trees because there are few left. They were either stolen or they disappeared because we don't have lands.



ABOVE: Khuri's design for his brother's house makes the indoor–outdoor patio a main organizing feature.

WHAT INTERESTS ME IN MY WORK IS TO BUILD BRIDGES — ACROSS THE ARAB WORLD AND TO STUDENTS, OUR FUTURE.

AC: I agree with you about the importance of education. I would like to share with you the al Mashrou' website, which is the result of research led by architecture students in a course I taught with the historian Jens Hanssen in 2022. The course focused on al Mashrou', an agrarian utopian village that was developed by Musa Alami, the head of the Arab Development Society in the 1950s and 1960s. The village was visionary in many respects: It aimed at being autonomous in food production, water, energy, education, et cetera...It laid out and tested sustainable design principles beyond the time! This little-known project echoes other utopian rural developments that emerged during the same era around the globe. Hence, documenting what remains of al-Mashrou' and understanding its legacy can help broaden our architectural discourse and pedagogy.

EK: Yes. What interests me in my work is really to build bridges — bridges between architects and also between the Arab world. And especially students. What amazed me was the effect that the 12 Olive Trees House had on students. They felt a true affinity for this architecture because, finally, there was someone speaking of their identity. And it gave them hope that you can still do architecture, and you can build your identity on the site, and you can protect it. And then, also in Jordan, winning first place in the Arab Architects Awards in 2022 gave me the opportunity to meet colleagues from the Arab world. It was really important to dialogue with them.

In Palestine, all the middle-class people live in the 48 [the borders that established the State of Israel in 1948]. My parents, all the agricultural people and the poor people are instead tied to the land. So with architecture, it's harder when you have a fragmented society and you don't have people with a level of appreciation for architecture. And on the other side, you don't have the state [support] to make public buildings. I don't have public buildings. The Khan of Jaljulia — usually, we don't have this kind of project to preserve in Israel. We didn't have the money to build it. When they held the competition bid for contractors, nobody came forward because the amount of money to restore the building was nothing. So the municipality told one of the contractors who wanted to do the streets in the village, "If you also make this project for us, I will hire you to make the streets of the village." So the contractor who carried out the work was specialized in general streetwork for the municipality — not in renovation.

AC: That's funny.

EK: I make very simple things — very poor, very modest projects — just to give life, to adapt my project to the situation. The works are characterized by simplicity and economy, and implemented at low costs; they reduce waste and re-employ the resources available on the site.

The client, or municipality, had seen the Khan al-Wakalah in Nablus; that's why they called me to make this project. And the Khan al-Wakalah began from a project I did for Riwaq, a competition for Birzeit, a long time ago. I won the competition with Davide Pagliarini, my colleague from Italy, but they didn't have the money to do it. And in the competition jury was Giovanni Fontana Antonelli, the head of UNESCO's office for Palestine. He saw my project, and for him it was such a different kind of thinking about architecture. Ten years passed, and then we met by chance, and he said, "I have this project in Nablus..."

AC: Few know the difficulty of building in Palestine. To move one bucket of cement, sometimes even one stone, is a quasi-impossible task. The Hebron Rehabilitation Committee has documented the many impediments to building homes and renovating heritage structures in the Old City. The medal of perseverance in architecture needs to go to anyone working on a Palestinian project today.

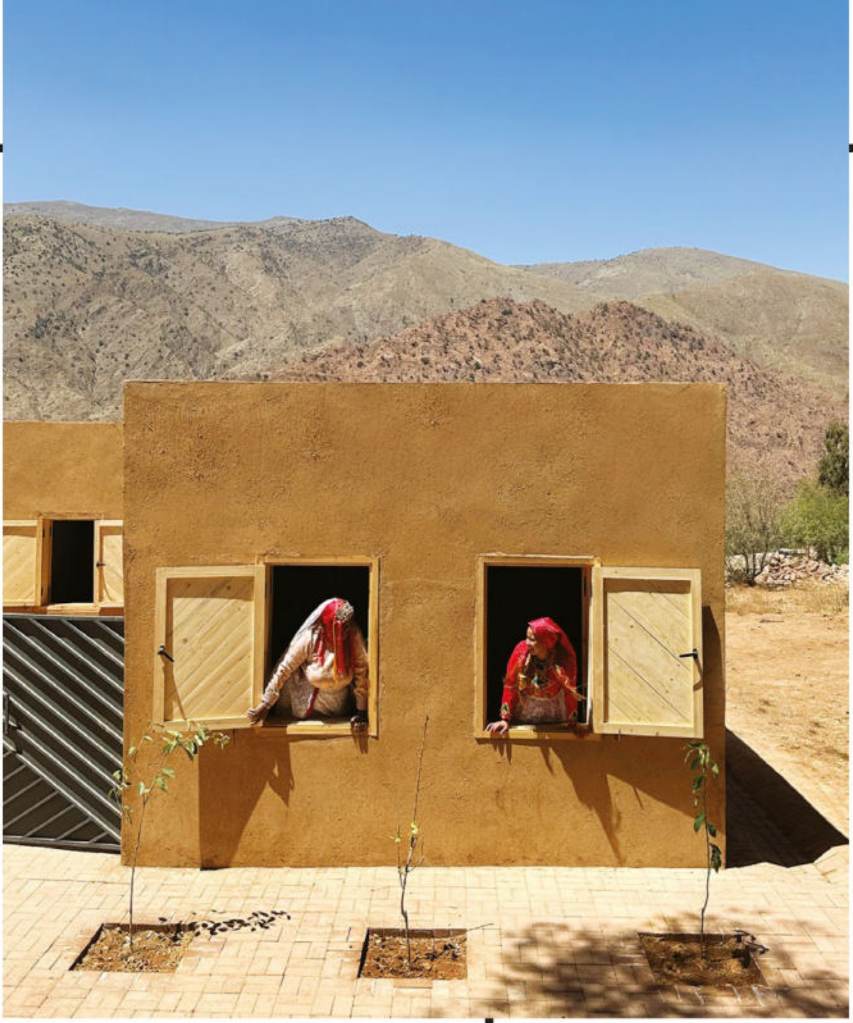
Your work is heroic in my eyes, Elias: In the most difficult of circumstances, with limited access to materials and skilled labour, you somehow manage to lead and complete poetic architectural projects. You not only preserve Palestinian heritage, but also imbue it with new life and meaning, as exemplified by the Khan projects. I share your approach towards heritage: I see it, too, as an evolving notion, one that is being continuously and organically activated, occupied and reimagined, rather than one frozen in a past that is no more. Your work is a small victory within a heritage landscape in Palestine that has been subject to a long history of erasure and dispossession or has been actively demolished.

EK: You are so kind. We still hope that architecture can bring about change. We are simply fighting to survive and don't fully understand who we are; we just try to make it through each day without the time or space to reflect and think clearly or constructively.

Last summer, I visited Granada, and it was a truly shocking experience for me. The war in Gaza made me reflect on many of the values the West tries to impose on us and how it seeks to control us, particularly in terms of architectural values that often feel foreign to our culture.

I suddenly felt overwhelmed with emotion when I saw the architecture within the Alhambra. It made me realize how much I appreciate Western architecture — I admire figures like [Jørn] Utzon, [Luis] Barragán and Álvaro Siza. But in that moment, I understood that I also deeply value the Arab influences present in their architecture. I suddenly felt like I had lost my way over the years, and I realized I needed to return to my roots, to better understand who we are and where we are headed.

ABOVE and BELOW: This affordable housing prototype was developed by Aziza Chaouni Projects (with a team that included LafargeHolcim engineer Amal El Abdi-Alaoui and prefabrication contractor Amine Maachi Haddou) after a devastating earthquake shook Morocco in September 2023. It is constructed with building blocks that interlock without the need for mortar — an innovation custom created for the project.



A key part of architecture is having control over the urban environment. As Palestinians, we have never had control over the urban scale or fabric. We can only influence small, limited things. The greatest tool Israel uses is the control of urban space. If you look at the history of Palestine, you can see how everything has been shaped from above with one primary aim: to control the territory.

…But I would like now to speak about your architecture, Aziza!

AC: Yes, sure! But it seems secondary compared to your work. Currently, my main personal challenge is to find a balance between my role as an academic/researcher/educator and as a practitioner. I can best describe myself as an activist architect, deeply committed to connecting with communities and working on the ground with them. One of my ongoing projects, which I started in 2010, is a music school called Joudour Sahara, located in the small desert oasis of M'hamid El Ghizlane, and I co-established a not-for-profit with a local friend (Halim Sbai) and two other foreign friends to fund it. For the 2,000 kids to take free classes, in dance and music, they are required to be part of an environmental program of tree planting and oasis regeneration, so the environmental aspect is as important as the cultural one. The school buildings use only rammed earth and local materials. The school boasts an outdoor auditorium and an underground water reservoir, which also acts as a classroom that's naturally ventilated because of the water underneath.

Also in Morocco, I completed a prototype as a volunteer with engineering colleagues for an anti-seismic house made with compressed earth bricks that are composed of 95 per cent earth and five per cent cement: They interlock without mortar so they can be built quickly. These projects exemplify my design approach, which tends to rethink vernacular typologies and construction methods.

EK: I feel there are always communities in your work, this feeling of society. You are working with networks and the client is also part of the community. What I want to ask you: This social architecture, this technique you use, do you think we can use it in modern architecture? Do you think it's possible to change the normal architecture we are doing?

AC: Yes! And let me tell you why: All the projects that we often see that get awards in our profession, it's often about their aesthetic or their technical and constructive innovation. But very seldom do the awards value the users' experience, the socio-economic and environmental impacts of these projects. We never ask users, "Are you happy with this building, do you use it often, are you comfortable inside it, is it answering your daily needs?" In the same vein, we rarely ask people who live near award-winning buildings how they feel about their place within the city. The role and opinion of the user is undervalued — but I think it's important to hear the voices of the future users of our buildings; it makes our designs richer. Our profession remains, after all, a service industry for a privileged few, since we only build projects for people who can afford to pay us. Our ethical role is to attempt to amplify the voices who have no seat at the decision-making table.

EK: Most people don't have this opportunity to have an architect, also here. But when I am doing projects, I also think about the neighbours. This is what I'm trying to do with the project of my brother. My brother loves me and he gives me the opportunity to make architecture. With the house I am designing for him, I want to change the neighbours — who are always fighting because they don't have space to build, and then privacy becomes a big problem. I tell them that even with small dimensions, we can go back to the patio — make a modern patio with simple things — and we can protect our privacy; we can use poor materials. I think our problem, as architects, is that we think we need to make architecture with details — "good architecture" that is shown in the media. The nice thing about Arab architecture is it can have no details. So I think the challenge now is to give people the instruments to do that kind of architecture. **AZ**

ARCHITECTURE

PROTECTIVE MEASURES

20.6.2024
20.6.2024
01.01.2025

In a film still from *To Build Law*, Bplus.xyz's Olaf Grawert (pointing) and Station.plus's Alina Kolar hold a meeting to review the timeline for their HouseEurope! campaign.

WHAT IF ADAPTIVE RE-USE WERE ENSHRINED IN LAW? BERLIN STUDIO **BPLUS.XYZ** AND ITS RESEARCH ARM **STATION.PLUS** HAVE DESIGNED A DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR EUROPE TO DO JUST THAT

INTERVIEW BY
ELIZABETH PAGLIACOLO
& STEFAN NOVAKOVIC

THE PROJECTS OF BPLUS.XYZ sometimes have quirky names — Antivilla, Mäusebunker (Mouse House), Casa Storta (Crooked House) — which befit their transmogrified forms. Through the renovation of often brutalist structures, the Berlin firm founded by Arno Brandlhuber (first as Brandlhuber+ in 2006, then as B+ in 2021) has amassed an eclectic portfolio of imaginatively repurposed buildings. Most remarkable: its own offices in two towers that remained standing like a soaring relic after the surrounding buildings that once joined them to form a factory complex were torn down. Nicknamed San Gimignano Lichtenberg — a wink at the medieval towers of the Tuscan town — the restored buildings are the locus of a growing movement.

The firm's latest undertaking is the design of legislation that would incentivize adaptive re-use over the type of demolition followed by real estate speculation that typically leads to housing shortages in cities around the continent. The campaign is called HouseEurope! — another spirited name, this time not for a single building but for the future of housing across multiple regions — and it seeks to tap into the power of European Citizens' Initiatives (ECI), whereby citizen councils made up of seven members from seven EU countries galvanize fellow nationals to propose new laws. In order for the desired legislation to be brought forward to the European Commission (which could then endorse it to the European Parliament and the Council), an ECI needs to reach one million signatures in 12 months.

Let the race begin: In November 2024, Bplus.xyz officially launched its ECI drive — but not before establishing a policy lab. Together with Station.plus, its teaching and research platform in ETH Zurich's architecture department, it has fine-tuned a communications campaign that could foster democratic support for a renovation-first model. All of this is captured in the documentary and exhibition *To Build Law*, curated by Francesco Garutti alongside film director Joshua Frank for the Canadian Centre for Architecture as part of the museum's Groundwork series. During the Montreal premiere, *Azure*'s Elizabeth Pagliacolo and Stefan Novakovic met up with Bplus.xyz's Olaf Grawert and Station.plus's Alina Kolar to learn more about what it takes to design preservation law.

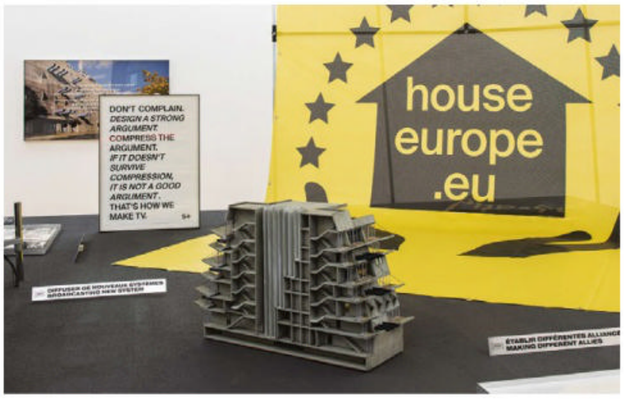
Elizabeth Pagliacolo: Please explain the legislation that you're seeking to enact. Would it create a legal framework around preserving buildings?

OLAF GRAWERT: No, but it would make the renovation and transformation of existing buildings economically viable so people would say "I'll just do this." There are three main incentives: The first is tax reductions on renovation and transformation work and re-used materials so that this work is just cheaper. The second is to change the way we look at existing buildings so that we no longer only see all the risks, but also the potentials. And then the third one is giving the CO_2 in the building a value. When you demolish, you would pay for throwing away the embodied CO_2.

There's also another financial incentive: subsidies. Right now, you have a lot of subsidized loans for new construction, for instance to build your single-family house. It was hilarious when the Conservative Party said, "We will give a €30,000 property tax break to every family with two children who wants to build a single-family house." They thought that's an incentive to get to two children, because we're an aging society. So it would solve problem number one, and then it boosts the building industry, which is super important. But it has consequences, because you also have to build streets, schools, a kindergarten — and that leads to suburban sprawl.

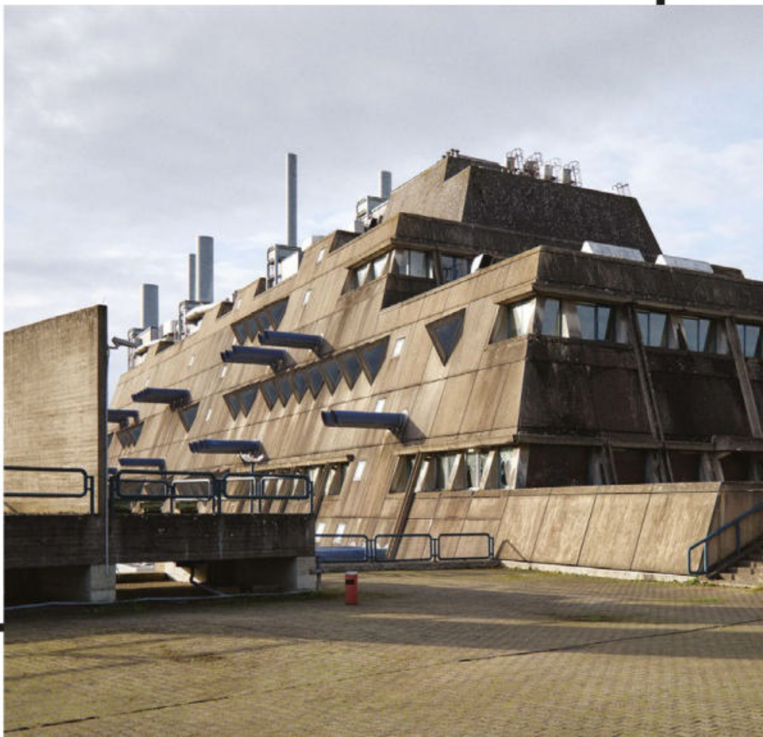
EP: How and when did the project of HouseEurope! begin for the firm?

OG: It was at the point when we realized that the way we had practised until then no longer functioned. It's the moment when the pressure on the land, on the building stock and


DON'T COMPLAIN.
DESIGN A STRONG ARGUMENT.
COMPRESS THE ARGUMENT.
IF IT DOESN'T SURVIVE COMPRESSION, IT IS NOT A GOOD ARGUMENT.
THAT'S HOW WE MAKE TV.
house europe .eu
DIFFUSER DE NOUVEAUX SYSTÈMES
BROADCASTING NEW SYSTEM
ÉTABLIR DIFFÉRENTES ALLIANCES
MAKING DIFFERENT ALLIES

LEFT: A section model of the Mäusebunker (below) and the branding for HouseEurope! are displayed at the Canadian Centre for Architecture's exhibition.

PHOTOS BY ROBERT ŚWIERCZYŃSKI (SAN GIMIGNANO LICHTENBURG AND MÄUSEBUNKER); COURTESY OF CCA (TO BUILD LAW EXHIBITION AND FILM)



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FIX IT!

Creating slogans that resonate with the public — such as "Fix it!" — was a major focus of the campaign.

on the market gets so high that people think it makes automatic economic sense to demolish and build new. And this is a learning for any context, and it can happen anywhere, not only in cities. When we travelled to South Tyrol, which seems a rather rural area, and spoke to people there, they would say, "We cannot afford housing anymore. Our buildings are demolished, rebuilt for hotels or second homes." So this mechanism of value creation is something that happens everywhere.

In essence, we were working on a project, and our usual method did not function any longer because the value of the land was so high that investors said, "No matter what you do, we're going to demolish and build new." In that moment, we realized that we could no longer look for loopholes — we could no longer see existing laws as a design tool, but actually had to design the law as a tool.

EP: That project was Mäusebunker, a former research facility that did animal testing. (Bplus.xyz joined an effort led by architect and conservationist Gunnar Klack and Felix Torkar of SOSBrutalism to save Mäusebunker, designed by Gerd and Magdalena Hänska and built between 1971 and 1981).

OG: Yes, this gigantic brutalist concrete building with blue tubes. It was an unused building and we made an offer to take it over and re-use it. We made a proposal, and in the moment when the proposal was actually being checked — is it viable? Can it function? — our banker said, "We cannot finance this project because there are so many risks, but there are no risks in new construction." And we said, "But that's not true." You don't know which risks are in the existing building, but you also don't know which risks are in the new project — especially at the time, shortly after the pandemic, when all the supply chains collapsed. And then the war in Ukraine started, and energy prices rocketed. So all of a sudden, you were in a situation where new construction is full of risks.

ALINA KOLAR: And then, from the perspective of Station.plus, there's how that practice evolves in the sense of storytelling. It's not only designing the law, but also designing the advent of an idea into culture. And in that sense, Mäusebunker is an interesting example, where the narrative becomes very clear that the demolition is as outdated as animal testing — and food waste and single-use plastics, all things that are relatable for people. So it's the designing of the law, and then the understanding of, like, is there a way that we can make this more accessible through storytelling? And what would that be?

Stefan Novakovic: Because of the way that the laws are constructed, there's this element of direct democracy. You need the signatures, so you can't just design the law in and of itself without designing a sort of broader cultural shift to inspire that change.

AK: In the case of the European Citizens' Initiative, yes, but there are other ways, too. We spoke to media agencies in order to understand, how do you do a campaign? And do we really want to do this? Or do we just want to lobby? In our understanding of direct democracy, we think it's a good idea to bring a collaborative level and more people into this conversation and to expand this understanding of the built environment.

THERE ARE FOUR LAYERS TO COMMUNICATING THE CAMPAIGN: SOCIAL, ECOLOGICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL.

EP: And the language that you developed grew from that. I really love your slogan "Power to Renovation" — that you use the word "renovation" rather than a more architectural term like "adaptive re-use." How did you create a consensus around how you're telling the story and how you're testing it with different audiences?

AK: We consulted with a very big media agency because we wanted to have someone who approached the mainstream from a sales perspective and knew how to reach many people. And we had a lot of conversations. They were giving us three ways for how we could approach the campaign with specific slogans like "The Fundaments of Forever," which also came with an aesthetic and a vibe. We were like, "This is grammatically wrong." They were thinking "the fundamental" like "foundations," but they came up with these slightly wrong English phrases. With the visuals, it seemed very conservative and not open for change.

We had made this comparison — that demolition is as outdated as food waste — but the agency felt we should say demolition is as outdated as fossil fuel–based cars and *blah blah blah*. And we said, "We get what you mean, but the terms you use did not create consensus for us, while food waste, animal testing, and single-use plastics are things that speak to people." So there were a lot of conversations around it, and at a certain point I said, "I have to stop this now." But I'm happy we had them, because they made us come up with our own proposals, which then feels natural.

EP: During this process, you learned that 18-to-24-year-olds didn't seem as engaged with this topic. How do you target them specifically? Were there any learnings there?

The brutalist towers that Bplus.xyz saved (below) and adapted into its headquarters (right), dubbing it San Gimignano Lichtenberg, display the power of renovating industrial buildings with new uses.

AK: The agency's idea was to leave them out: Go for the lowest threshold to reach people if we are only talking about one million signatures, right? But then I can make the point that this disregards architecture students — who are definitely still interested in the topic. But they were not represented in the 1,000 people polled.

There was also this conversation where they suggested that we only generate leads. They wanted us to find a million euros — one euro per signature — to just generate the leads online. It's an algorithmic way of reaching people several times, but we would have no idea who's voting. I guess you can do that, but if you think about direct democracy, and if you want to talk to people and extend the entire understanding of how the built environment actually relates to your life, it's not really the way to go.

SN: You're not building a movement, you're not building a community, you're not building a discourse.

OG: Also, it does something else: It forces you to create taglines and slogans that are so generic and open, like "Change now." And even "Fix it," one of our slogans, is already very close to being very generic. But you can always sense how you have to address different people with different arguments. There are those who are open to the social argument — that in saving the buildings, you save the neighbourhood, the community, the fabric of the city. You sense that they are also clearly on the ecological path, because in every second sentence, they speak about CO_2 emissions. With conservatives, you speak about heritage.

There are these four layers — social, ecological, economic and cultural. You just order them differently depending on who you are speaking to. It's not that we don't tell everyone everything, but in the European context, you would start with the social democratic one, followed by the economic one, followed by the ecological and then the cultural. You can create orders of arguments.

EP: What's the argument for people who only care about the economics?

OG: Every million dollars invested in renovation creates an average 12 to 18 jobs, and you are able to create industry that is less dependent on global material chains. So you shift the money you invest from material to maker, and that also leads to a growth in your economy. It's supporting your national industry in the moment where people are like, "Oh my God, can we no longer rely on global dependencies?" This economic argument also takes away the anxiety that what we suggest is killing industry or jobs. It's not true.

EP: And then the other argument I'm interested in is this idea about value. Even the building that you work out of — the San Gimignano Lichtenberg — is a really industrial building. The average person might not see the heritage meaning in that. So how do we define value? And how do we quantify the value of existing structures, even if they're raw concrete towers?

OG: You feel like you have two realities. You can take the towers as an example, but you could also take a lot of other modernist buildings as cases — and then also, in an Eastern European context, a lot of prefabricated, socialist state–built housing, where the buildings are tied to a political system. There are people who say, "It's ugly, but I don't care." But then there are others who say, "I really have a problem with it; I want it to go." But they don't fully understand that the new build will be — *has* to be — more expensive. What

usually happens in Europe when a building is demolished and then rebuilt is that there are fewer people [but they are] in bigger and more expensive apartments. So the culture argument is the most difficult one, because it's almost like trauma therapy. It's a bit weird because you have to accept that this trauma is not connected to a building, and then you have to find some healing in it.

AK: It also gives you back your agency; there is this power in these buildings, right? And if you think that you can actually do something with it, that you just don't have to get rid of it, then you can also change that power you have to do something — also because renovation is easier, smaller and step-by-step, whereas the construction of new and big buildings takes it away from you completely. There's a relation to direct democracy there as well.

SN: There are very obvious historical precedents for how our tastes and preferences and our values as a society change and evolve with relation to architecture. For a while in North America, for instance, people thought Victorian housing was crap, and now everybody loves Victorian houses. From a design perspective, your work is also really sexy. So in terms of design, how do you approach these types of buildings like your own office building, and what do you do as a designer to make it beautiful in the eyes of someone like me, or to get it on the cover of a magazine?

OG: This is the taste question. And thank you — I would agree! I think that what we can do, amongst students and professionals, is to make this way of practising a viable alternative, one where students say, "Oh, that's interesting: I can imagine having a practice that only does renovation, transformation and re-use — and make it look sexy." On the other hand, my brother, who has now renovated our family house, would say, "I don't work hard to have something that looks like it's not done," you know? So he wants it to be finished. This whole adaptive re-use world looks so much like a DIY aesthetic — which is totally valid but it excludes a lot of people who just want something to be finished. I think that the question is, how many other aesthetics do we need to find that follow the similar logic and offer everyone something? Because it needs to become a lifestyle. People need to say, "I want this."

SN: It's interesting. I'm thinking about the evolution of tastes. Pierre Bourdieu might say, "Your project is on the cover of the *New York Times Style Magazine*, which means it now becomes the taste of rich people, which means that in 50 years, it's what middle-class people are going to want." But you're talking about material honesty. You're not building that argument just as an abstract philosophical one; there is a rationale for material honesty in terms of its ease of maintenance, and so we can give it an economic basis.

OG: Yes, in fact, we did this project in Minneapolis, this conversion of a parking garage, and we were there for the facade mock-up. So we visited different companies, and one of them said, "Well, we can do this aluminum facade." And they put a sheet in front of me, and I looked at it in section: super-thin aluminum, plastic core and super-thin aluminum. I said, "Do you have this in solid aluminum?" And he said, "Yes, of course." And he brings the other sample. This for sure is more expensive, the pure aluminum one? And he said no. But why wouldn't I then take the pure aluminum one? And he said that because the plastic core one is x per cent lighter, the panel can be x per cent bigger, and one worker can install more facade more quickly, because they don't get tired.

And I was sitting there, and I thought, that's super difficult, because now labour is the argument that, in that sense, makes the material that destroys the planet more viable. It's only a tiny margin — but then, of course, you build a skyscraper and this tiny margin becomes, all of a sudden, real money, and you see this potential to save thousands of dollars. So they say "Let's go for the plastic one" because the consequences of the plastic one have no price.

SN: We see the material as a variable, but for whatever reason, we don't see the labour as a variable. In that sense, we tend to see the current logic of the market as something immovable, even though so many factors can shift.

AK: It's movable — and this is at the core of what we're doing. This is a systemic change for cultures — it doesn't need to be like any of that.

OG: Sometimes you ask yourself, what is really better? Then, as an architect, you should also suggest the operating model of the building, and discuss with the developer how they ensure that, afterwards, it is not an empty tower that just functions as an asset.

I was in New York recently, and my friends were telling me what has been demolished for these buildings to be built, for instance along the High Line. They put a map of Manhattan on the table, where the different parts have the flags of the countries where the money comes from. Because you can just trace it back, that all of these buildings have been built from three funds from one country, just as an investment. And then you ask, "But what is the use, and who is in there?" No one. Okay, you still have people who want to live in the city, so politics has to create the framework and the conditions to ensure that whatever is demolished to be rebuilt is serving someone something. Because this is crazy. **AZ**

In January, architectural writer **Mimi Zeiger** was forced to evacuate as wildfires raged across Los Angeles. Now that they are contained, she surveys the damage — and the possibilities for a new way forward

LETTER FROM PASADENA

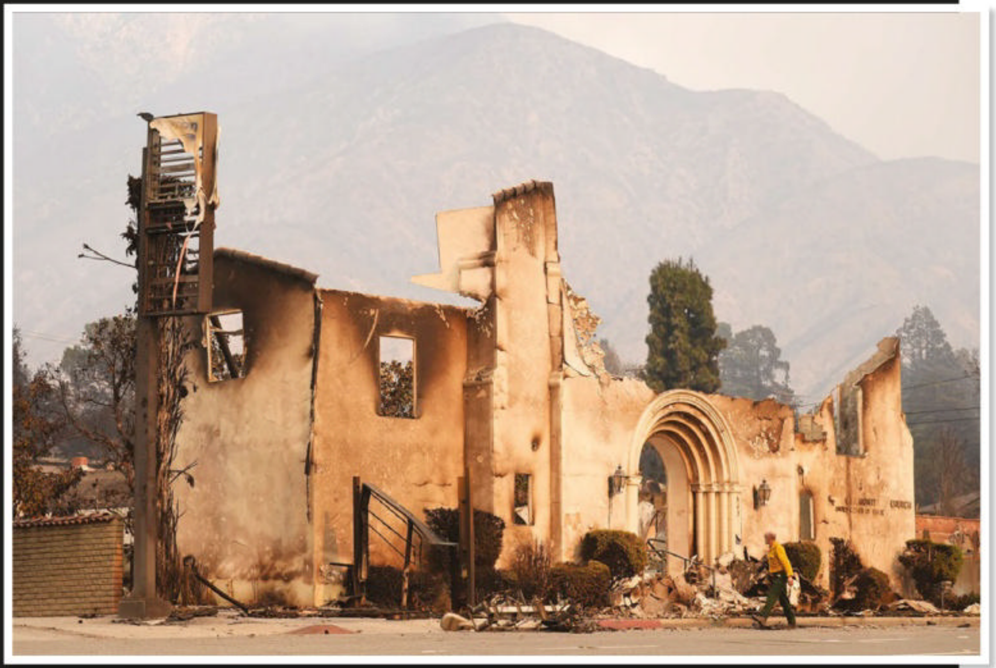


PHOTO BY CHRIS PIZZELLO/AP PHOTO/CP IMAGES

THE LOS ANGELES WILDFIRES — social, urban, environmental catastrophes — mark a bitter, ash-tinged end of the Western imaginary. In the Pacific Palisades and in Altadena, the American dream of a domestic pastoral has gone up in smoke, a burnt offering to the gods of 20th-century real estate development.

Its acrid stench reached me on January 7, a Tuesday night whipped by howling winds. Earlier in the day, while driving the 134 Freeway from Pasadena to Silver Lake, I had seen a plume rising over the Westside: the Palisades Fire. I found it concerning, but distant, like a black and white photograph of an atomic bomb. By evening, Altadena was aflame. The community tucked into the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains is just a few miles from my apartment, its closeness driven home as evacuation orders and red flag warnings lit up my phone. Propelled by Santa Ana winds, ash travelled that distance quickly.

I bought my one-bedroom condo a few years ago, desperate to get out of the precarious rental market. Concrete and glass on a street of wood and stucco, my apartment building was built in the mid-sixties by a mostly unknown disciple of Richard Neutra. We dubbed it the “Swiss Parking Garage.” I immediately loved the unit’s floor-to-ceiling windows. That night, those sliding glass doors proved a liability. Smoke leaked in through the imperfections in the aging aluminum frame.

“All good architecture leaks” is a truism whose origins can be traced back to Frank Lloyd Wright. He was talking about roofs, not windows, as if rain was our biggest worry in a season of drought. I taped up the edges of the sliding doors, added wadded up newsprint, and went to bed hoping that the infrastructure of the 10-lane 210 highway would be a substantial enough firebreak if the winds pushed the flames southward.

In the morning, the air was dark and clogged with flying debris. I decided to drive to my parents’ house in the Bay Area. Go-bag, terrier and laptop loaded into the car, I headed north.

Southern California architecture is predicated on thinness, best demonstrated in the modernist mien, but not reserved to it. Our structures and our lifestyles capitalize on temperate weather. But the climate crisis is changing — has changed — that relationship, turning it into a myth punctuated with quotes from writer Joan Didion (who diagnosed of the Santa Ana winds a kind of collective neurosis). Dry seasons are hotter and longer across the West. Air conditioners wheeze as triple-digit days stretch into weeks. The confluence of a warm, arid winter and desert winds sparked these firestorms, making January (and not the usual September) the fire season. Neither hardened nor resilient, most of our architecture is ill-equipped for this new normal.

Modernist tenets of indoor–outdoor living and lightweight building systems, as famously demonstrated in the Case Study homes, rely on a conception of nature as largely benign. Boundaries between domestic life and landscape are porous, and architecture acts as a membrane. Los Angeles is a place of freedom; to build with — or against — nature largely consists of relegating our doubts to code books. As such, we are routinely surprised when disaster shakes us from the lull of false security. (The sharp pain of rising homeowners insurance is perhaps the rudest of awakenings for those not immediately impacted by fire.) Houses perched on hillsides and neighbourhoods pushed into canyons represent design and suburbanesque planning ideologies that privilege the aesthetics of nature over the consequences of nature — ensuring top market value.

The Eaton and Palisades wildfires were, of course, not discriminating with regards to architectural style. Angelenos lost more than 15,000 homes and structures: Mission Revival edifices, ornate McMansions, Craftsman bungalows, and low-slung ranches. In Altadena, a historically Black neighbourhood turned to ash, the fire erased multi-generational homes. Will Rogers's movie-star ranch house, a 1926 old-timey snapshot of the Wild West, succumbed, as did Robert Bridges's precariously sited house, which teetered over Sunset Boulevard on stilts. Gone, too, is the Keeler House (1991) by SCI-Arc founder Ray Kappe; its redwood structure seemed to float above the hillside, and its decks stretched out toward the Pacific Ocean as if yearning for even more view. Photographs after the wildfire show three concrete cores rising from the ruins.

In 1923, my hometown of Berkeley was ravaged by fire. A half-century later, my parents purchased the Spanish-style house I grew up in. It was the second structure to be built on the property, the first destroyed along with 640 others as neighbourhoods north of the UC Berkeley campus burned. There is a reminder of catastrophe in front of my parents' house: the curb cut of an original driveway. I hadn't thought much of it as a fire scar until I fled the smoke, drove 376 miles and parked on the street.

One hundred years passed. The neighbourhood reconstituted itself over the course of the 20th century, wood and stucco, wood and stucco winding further and further up the hill. A notable exception: Bernard Maybeck's fireproof Sack House (1924), built on the foundation of his family's home, which was lost in the blaze. The roof and exterior walls were covered in what Maybeck called "Bubblestone," an architectural experiment where burlap sacks are dipped in a mixture of glue, Portland cement, sand and water, then hand-draped over wooden slats.

Los Angeles is readying itself to rebuild — quickly. Both Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass and California Governor Gavin Newsom have issued orders to fast-track new construction. Given the enormous devastation in Altadena, Pacific Palisades and Malibu, such an expedient response is intended to serve the people tragically impacted. I've seen a spreadsheet of more than 400 GoFundMe pages, each documenting an unbearable personal toll and pleading for assistance.

Yet we haven't taken a collective pause to consider just how to rebuild. I want to advocate for more experimental approaches to construction à la Maybeck's Bubblestone. A recent exhibition at Craft Contemporary, entitled "Material Acts," explored the art and science of creating new architecture construction elements. On view were dozens of innovations — from mycelium textiles to gravel knit into structural forms by robots. The design practice Rael San Fratello contributed a large-format 3D-printed adobe dome, a high-tech take on fire-resistant adobe block masonry. A recent petition started by environmental activist and educator Marysia Miernowska demands that the City of Pasadena rebuild using "fire-resistant, natural building technologies" such as cob, straw bale, superadobe, and rammed earth. Certainly, there are lessons here.

WE HAVEN'T TAKEN A COLLECTIVE MOMENT TO CONSIDER HOW TO REBUILD. I WANT TO ADVOCATE FOR MORE EXPERIMENTAL APPROACHES.

Still, insurance payoffs often only allow the reproduction of what was lost, if that. This traps us in a vicious cycle. And yet, to suggest that California's chaparral ecology is a reoccurring hazard zone that should be off-limits to construction, as Mike Davis does in "The Case of Letting Malibu Burn" (*Ecology of Fear*, 1998), is an affront to those left without a neighbourhood, home, business or school. This is a fire paradox.

And there's another. Even before the fires, Los Angeles was in need of housing: affordable, equitable, missing middle, market rate — all of it. In an effort to address the issue, California passed laws to incentivize the construction of more units in residential neighbourhoods. A suite of state bills addressed accessory dwelling units and the California HOME Act (Senate Bill 9) allows for up to four units on a single-family parcel. As infill within the urban fabric, these initiatives make a lot of sense, but in the aftermath of catastrophe, they have a possible darker outcome. If homeowners or developers choose to rebuild at a higher density, it puts more people in high-risk areas. Like all dystopias, this one would be unevenly distributed, with wealthy enclaves in a better position to reconstruct their estates and working and middle-class areas left to cope.

In 1998, the same year Davis published *Ecology of Fear*, writer and environmentalist John McPhee's iconic essay "Los Angeles against the Mountains" appeared in the *New Yorker*. It vividly captured the disaster-movie reality of living in a metropolis that sprawls into the foothills of the San Gabriel and Santa Monica Mountains, focusing not on fire but on mudslides. And it explored the clever system of dams, channels and basins that vein the hillsides, which help buffer residential areas from debris flows — and the cost of cleanup. "Were it not for the alert, unflinching manner and imaginative strategies by which Los Angeles outwits the mountains, nature's invoices at such times would run into the billions," McPhee wrote.

Could there be a parallel infrastructure to protect against wildfires? A defensible space that operates not at the scale of the individual home but at the municipal level, perhaps? A strategy of degrowth, where the state purchases properties (such as along Malibu's Pacific Coast Highway)? This could establish networks of parks, ponds, or the mammoth engineering equivalent of the MOSE project that guards Venice, Italy, from mass flooding. These grand schemes might be pipe dreams brought on by grief and toxic winds, or maybe they are visions of what a collective rebuilding might endeavour.

I returned to Pasadena a week after the fires; the air quality was better but not great. I was fine, my condo was fine. When I walked around my neighbourhood, it was eerily normal, except that everything was covered in a fine layer of soot. Downed palm fronds and branches were piled high on curbs waiting for the otherwise distracted City of Pasadena crews to pick them up.

As I write this, it's raining in Los Angeles. Not enough to cause mudslides in burn areas but, I hope, enough to dampen the hillsides and assist firefighters in putting out lingering hot spots. When it stops, the sky over the basin will sparkle, scrubbed clean of particulate, and we'll continue the long path to recovery. AZ

After decades of Euro-Canadian planning, Iqaluit is finally benefitting from architecture that boldly meets the context

DESIGNING NORTH

STORY BY ADELE WEDER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW LATREILLE

FOR TOO LONG, the top-down approach to delivering architecture to Canada's remote communities has largely been an abysmal failure. Much of the problem, to be sure, derives from the astronomical cost and logistics of shipping materials to the North. Formulaic thinking and old-fashioned neglect also figure prominently. Plus, the built landscapes north of the 60th parallel are rarely seen by design journalists and critics, let alone the majority of Canadians. Out of sight, out of mind.

And yet, with their rich heritage and perennial need for housing, northern communities should be the perfect stage for innovation and investment in the built environment. A permanent local community with deep ties to the land is a hugely important bulwark against malign foreign interests — especially now, as climate change widens the Northwest Passage and foreign leaders wear their imperial ambitions on their sleeves. Serving the communities of the North is not just a matter of ethics and legality; for Canada, it may turn out to be an existential issue. Canada's Arctic coastline — its northern "border" — is 162,000 kilometres long, compared with the 8,900-kilometre-long, highly regulated border to the south. It is newly vulnerable, and its communities require more housing and public buildings than ever before.

In Iqaluit, a city of about 7,500 on Baffin Island, development has long focused on the perceived limitations of building in the North. A new generation of architecture is challenging that notion.

But what we think of as the Canadian "North" is huge and varied: almost four million square kilometres with soil conditions, topography, weather patterns and social customs that differ from place to place. There are, in the words of architects Mason White and Lola Sheppard of Lateral Office, "a multiplicity of norths."

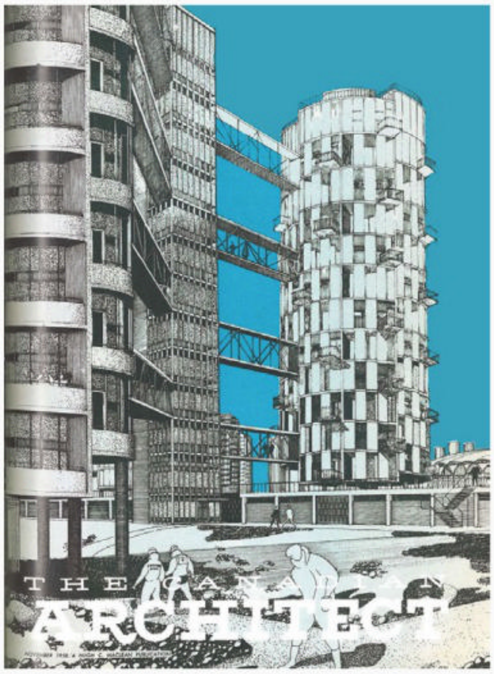
Iqaluit — the capital of Nunavut — offers us a case study on the right and wrong ways to design for the North. As with many other northern communities, this city is informed by both a rich underlying culture and the cataclysm of colonialism and modernity. Once known as Frobisher Bay, it has suffered the consequences of southern-centric planning and building. But recent architectural projects show the value of attentive, locally focused design, when architects are prepared to embrace that approach.

Foremost among the region's architectural champions are Sheppard and White, who authored the benchmark 2017 book *Many Norths: Spatial Practice in a Polar Territory* to unpack the complexities of building in such diverse regions. What is pertinent and challenging in a capital of roughly 7,500 people on Baffin Island is a world apart from what is pertinent and challenging in a landlocked hamlet in the Yukon. These kinds of qualitative differences are difficult to address in a meaningful way when housing and public buildings are designed from afar and shipped in as a kit of parts.

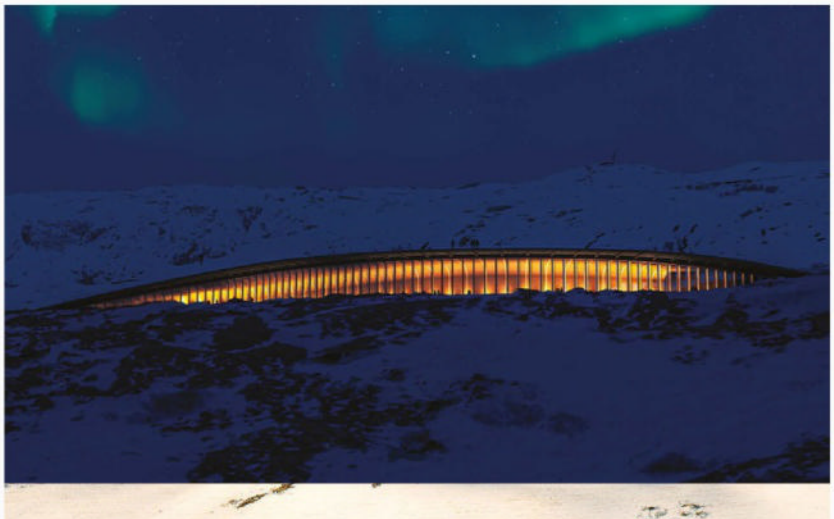
Even with those limitations, it's possible to create architecture that is both meaningful and efficient, when architects take care to work with the local context and stakeholders. Recent examples are the Inuusirvik Community Wellness Hub, by Lateral Office, completed in late 2023; the Nunavut Arctic College Expansion, by Teeple Architects in collaboration with Winnipeg's Cibinel Architecture; and several buildings by Stantec — a corporate behemoth of a firm not always known for visual excitement — that liven up the treeless surroundings.

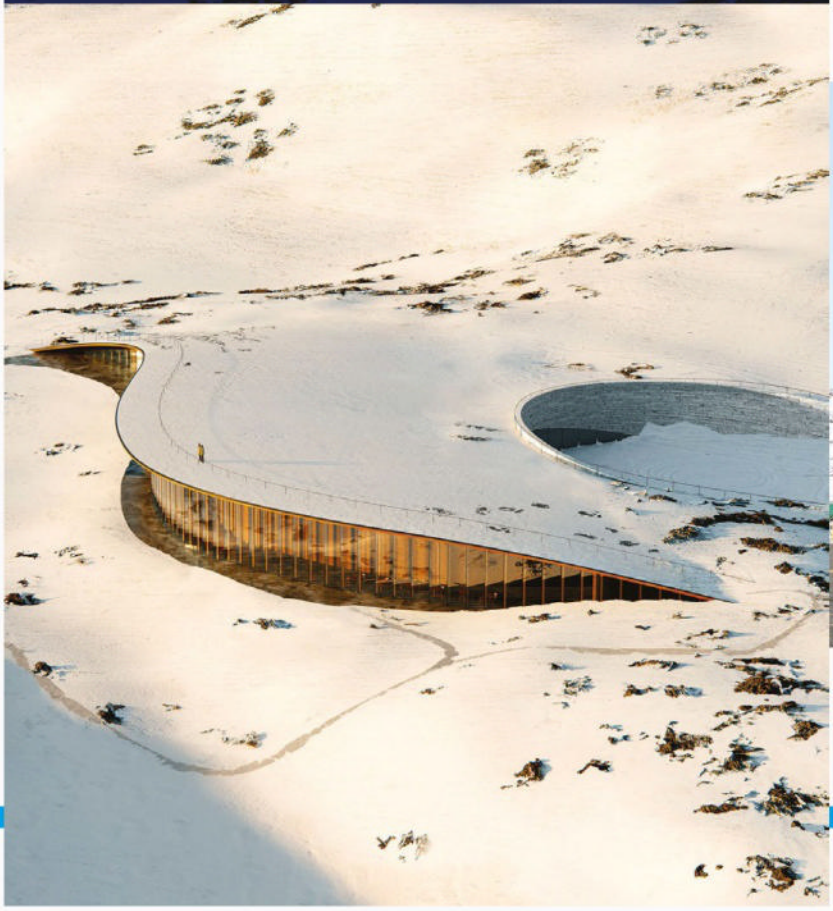
Building anything above the treeline is hampered by the dearth of readily available lumber, and building on an island requires everything to be either flown or barged in with strategic (and, in some cases, lucky) timing to the spring melt, which allows water access to certain locales. Constructing on permafrost means the entire building must be built on piles, rather than a conventional foundation, because the incipient heat would begin to thaw the permafrost over time, and the structure would settle into a lopsided mass (known as a "thaw bulb"). Even within the same place, the soil and climate can shift

BELOW: A vision for Iqaluit, called "New Town 1, Frobisher Bay," made the cover of *The Canadian Architect* in 1958. It was premised on housing towers equipped with amenities so that residents would rarely have to brave the outdoors.



Danish architect Dorte Mandrup's award-winning proposal for the Nunavut Inuit Heritage Centre (right and above right) sees the building gently emerging from the Arctic landscape.





significantly over the years, and, along with the world's climate, the permafrost is changing, notes Bruce Carscadden. His firm, Carscadden Stokes McDonald Architects, working together with Stantec's architects and engineers, had to make allowances for that when designing the base of the Iqaluit Aquatic Centre.

The challenges for architects run well beyond engineering pragmatics, notes Vivian Manasc, founder of Edmonton-based firm Reimagine Architects. "The question has to be framed as: How do we build in the Arctic so that the people living in the Arctic are actually excited about sharing the culture of the Arctic?" Manasc served as the professional advisor for the recent international competition for the new Nunavut Inuit Heritage Centre, a process that involved extensive local consultation. Inuk architectural intern Nicole Luke, one of the competition jurors, notes that cultural expression can be embodied in architecture in many ways. The imperative, she warns, is to "avoid key cultural representation that's just surface-clad, or that can be taken off during the value-engineering process."

The four finalist schemes — by firms including Lateral Office with Teeple Architects, Bjarke Ingels Group, Helsinki-based ALA Architects, and Copenhagen-based Dorte Mandrup — all addressed the region's unique geography and lifestyle. The concept by Dorte Mandrup was chosen as the winner. Defined by a curvilinear triple-glazed facade and nestled in bedrock, the dramatic structure seems certain to create excitement, if and when it gets built. (Funding requests for big cultural buildings are stumbling through a rough patch these days.) Speaking to *Canadian Geographic*, Elder Sakiasie Sowdlooapik, who sits on the board of the Inuit Heritage Trust, explained that engagement played a big part in determining the experience of the building. "When we did the consultations with the community, they told us very clearly that the centre has to represent the landscape and how it's laid out — that it's not just going to be cubes," he said. "It's going to be something very different — beautiful from the outside and the inside."

This custom approach is a far cry from the one-size-fits-all building boom launched by Prime Minister John Diefenbaker in the 1950s. Under

ILLUSTRATION OF NEW TOWN COURTESY OF *CANADIAN ARCHITECT*;
INUIT HERITAGE CENTRE COURTESY OF DORTE MANDRUP

LEFT: The Iqaluit Aquatic Centre, by Carscadden Stokes McDonald Architects and Stantec, protects the permafrost while delivering a statement-making form.

> It's possible to create architecture that is meaningful and efficient when architects take care to work with the local context.

ᐃᖃᓗᐃᑦ IQALUIT

ABOVE: Stantec's Iqaluit International Airport, developed through a P3 partnership, is an elegant structure that withstands wind speeds of 130 kilometres per hour and doubles as a social connector.

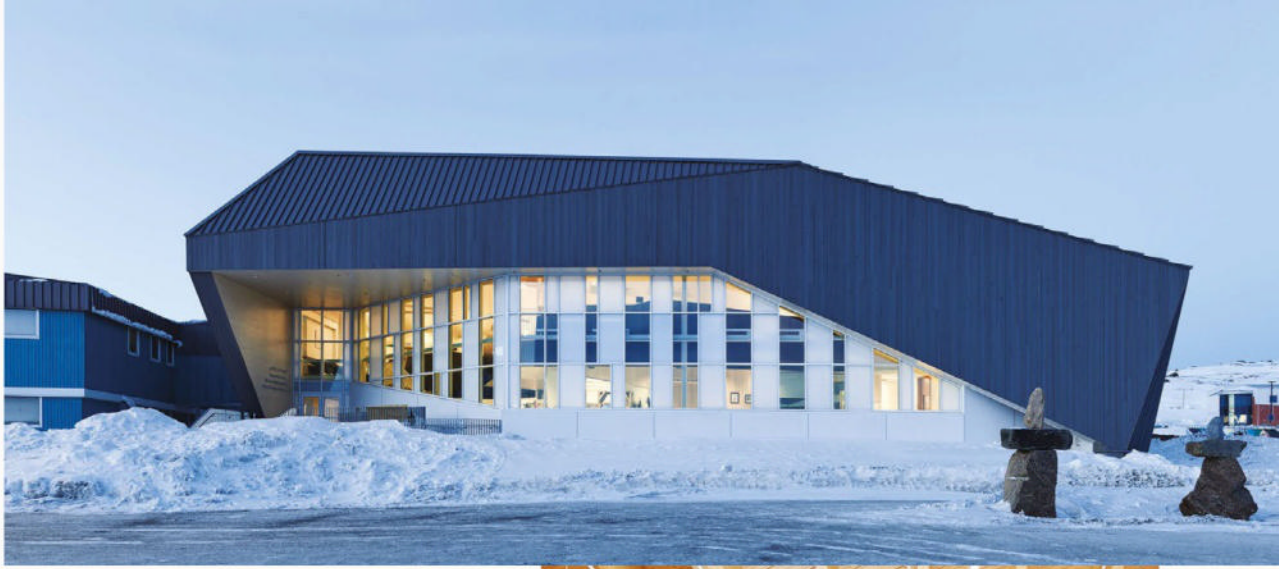
his watch, some 1,200 "matchbox houses" — essentially one-room plywood shacks — were hastily built for Inuit families, a paradigm that unsurprisingly proved to be an abject failure. The following years brought more ambitious design ideas, but from an overtly Euro-Canadian perspective. The federal government's chief architect devised the futuristic "New Town I, Frobisher Bay," as Iqaluit was then called. A self-contained mini-community, it was designed to house a thousand people — and all the goods and services they might need in life — within a cluster of interconnected 12-storey towers. As Sheppard and White write in *Many Norths*, "The fact that these practitioners viewed the environment as inhospitable when seen through the lens of their home climates illuminates a missed opportunity to collaborate with residents and address their specific needs."

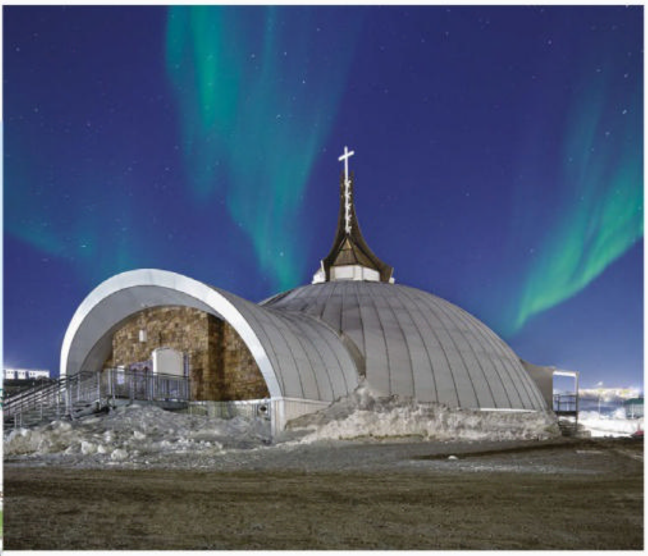
The principals of Whitehorse-based Kobayashi + Zedda Architects are even more critical of the existing built landscape of the Canadian Arctic and the rigid adherence to building codes and standards developed elsewhere. "The modern north was built by military and industrial interests, two organizations that consider community-building and housing as afterthoughts," says Jack Kobayashi. "We have inherited a completely inappropriate street network and housing typology, which is akin to inheriting an old gas-guzzler from your grandparents."

I know what he means. During two recent fortnight-long trips to Iqaluit, I stayed at Astro Hill, an architecturally mundane version of the New Town series built in stages from the late 1960s through the '70s. Astro Hill comprises a mid-rise apartment building, hotel, pub, cinema, grocery store, and smattering of offices and retailers, all connected internally by common spaces and corridors. It is such an anomaly in sprawling, low-rise Iqaluit that it's known not by its formal name but by its built form: Everyone in town simply calls it the Eight-Storey.

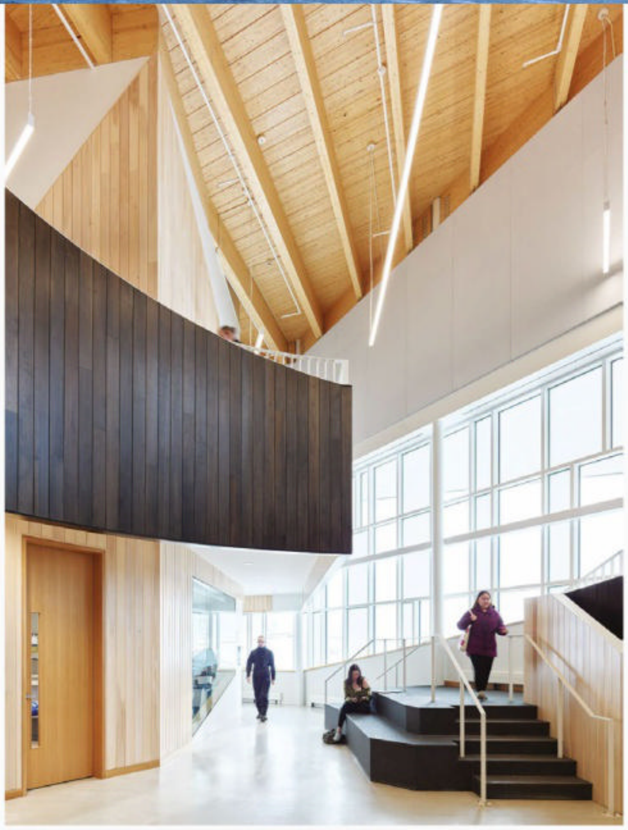
On paper, and to a southern city-slicker, it seems logical: Stay out of the cold, live your whole week — your whole life, even — away from the minus-thirty January climate. By day, I wandered through a grim labyrinth of windowless corridors or stared out the small window of the compact apartment; evenings, we would hear through the thin interior walls our neighbours' heated conversations or passionate encounters. Throughout the night, the rumble of the elevator down the hall pockmarked our sleep as shift workers and nighthawks returned to the lair.

RIGHT AND BELOW RIGHT: The Nunavut Arctic College Expansion by Teeple Architects is a spirit-lifting addition to an existing building.





ABOVE: St. Jude's Cathedral, by FSC Architects & Engineers, replaced a beloved (and similarly domed) building by Ron Thom that was destroyed in a fire.



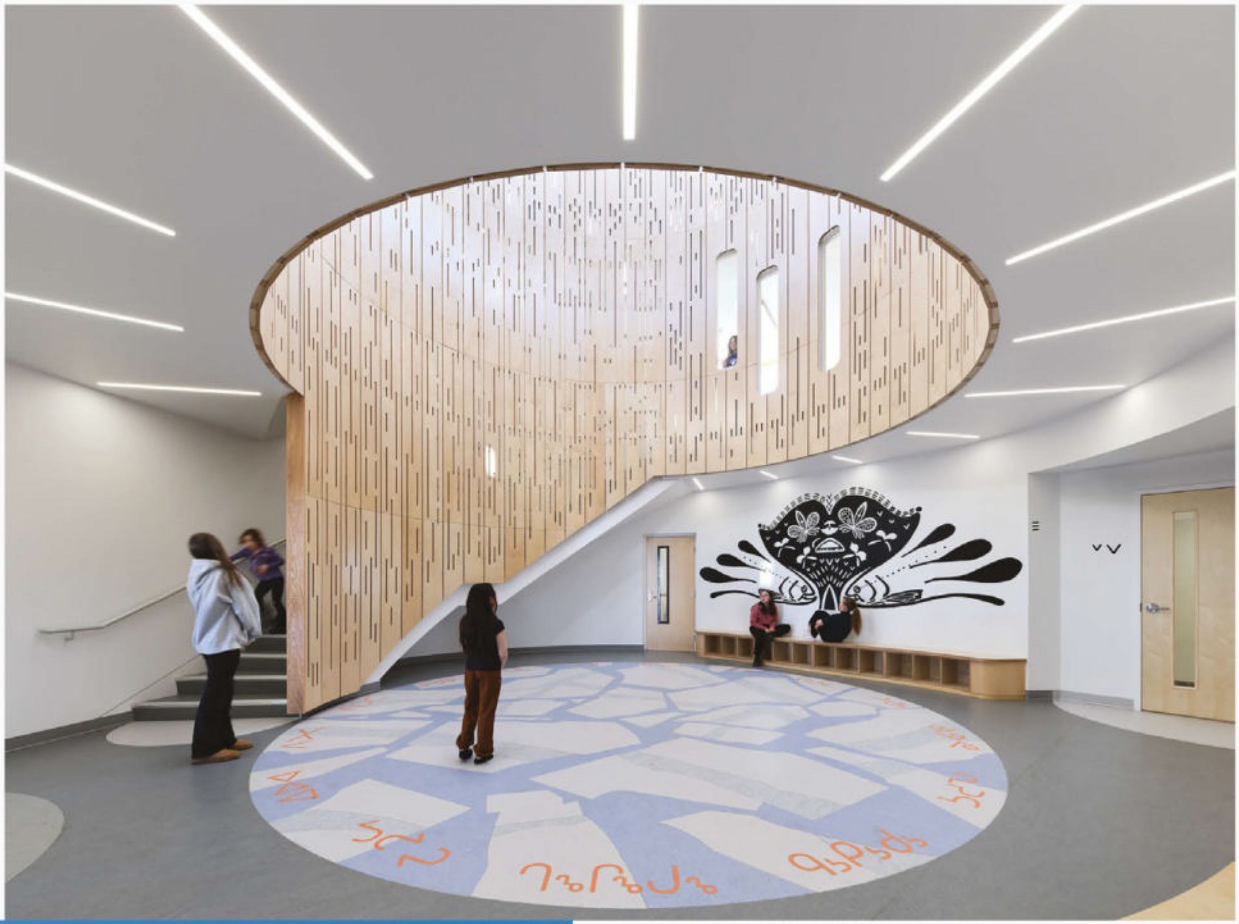
Building high and close together is a southern-centric solution. Traditionally, the Inuit way of life and inhabitation involves spreading out on the land. So the mid-to-high-rise labyrinth is a dud paradigm for the Arctic. But keeping up with the burgeoning housing demand is a perennial challenge, leading in some instances to haphazard sprawl and, in most cases, to orthogonal kit houses that don't project a sense of place. "The real priority is more community stakeholder and Indigenous involvement in the design of projects," says Josh Armstrong, an Iqaluit-based architect with Stantec.

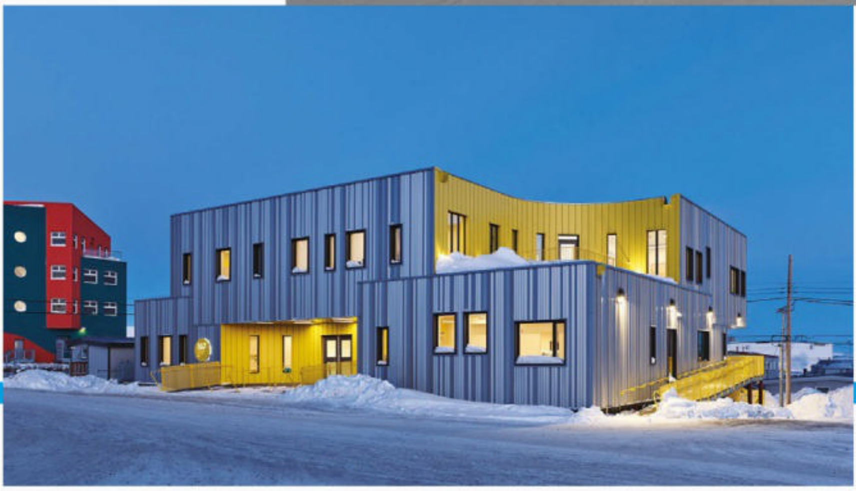
Armstrong worked on both the Iqaluit Aquatic Centre and on St. Jude's Cathedral, the social and spiritual nucleus for many residents. Ron Thom designed the original cathedral in 1970 as an igloo-like hemisphere furnished by local Inuit artisans, but it was tragically destroyed by fire in 2005. The replacement cathedral — like Thom's design, based on a dome — was completed by FSC Architects & Engineers (now owned by Stantec) in 2012; the architect of record is Harriet Burdett-Moulton, a Métis woman. Like the original cathedral, its creation involved a critical mass of local involvement and, not coincidentally, it seems well-used and well-loved by the community. For government-issue housing and public buildings, however, that kind of outreach had not been standard practice — until recently.

A concerted effort to engage local end-users early in the design process has been key to the success of the Aquatic Centre and the Iqaluit International Airport (also designed by Stantec), which double as social connectors. "Architecture is evolving in Iqaluit, because that Indigenous voice is pushing for change," says Armstrong, whose spouse is Inuit — which helps him understand the culture a little more every day, he says.

The most visually striking work of recent architecture is the 2018 Nunavut Arctic College Expansion, whose sculpted roofline evokes the topology of the surrounding region. Inside is a dramatic circular common space, warm wood cladding and a profusion of daylight in every corner. The cafeteria is off the main foyer, in keeping with the local tradition of making food preparation and communal dining a privileged place.

Teeple's design team sourced materials — pre-finished wood siding, super-insulated walls and triple-glazed windows — based on endurance and insulating quality that would be overkill in the south. And yet cedar, which architects usually avoid as an exterior cladding, given its propensity to rot,





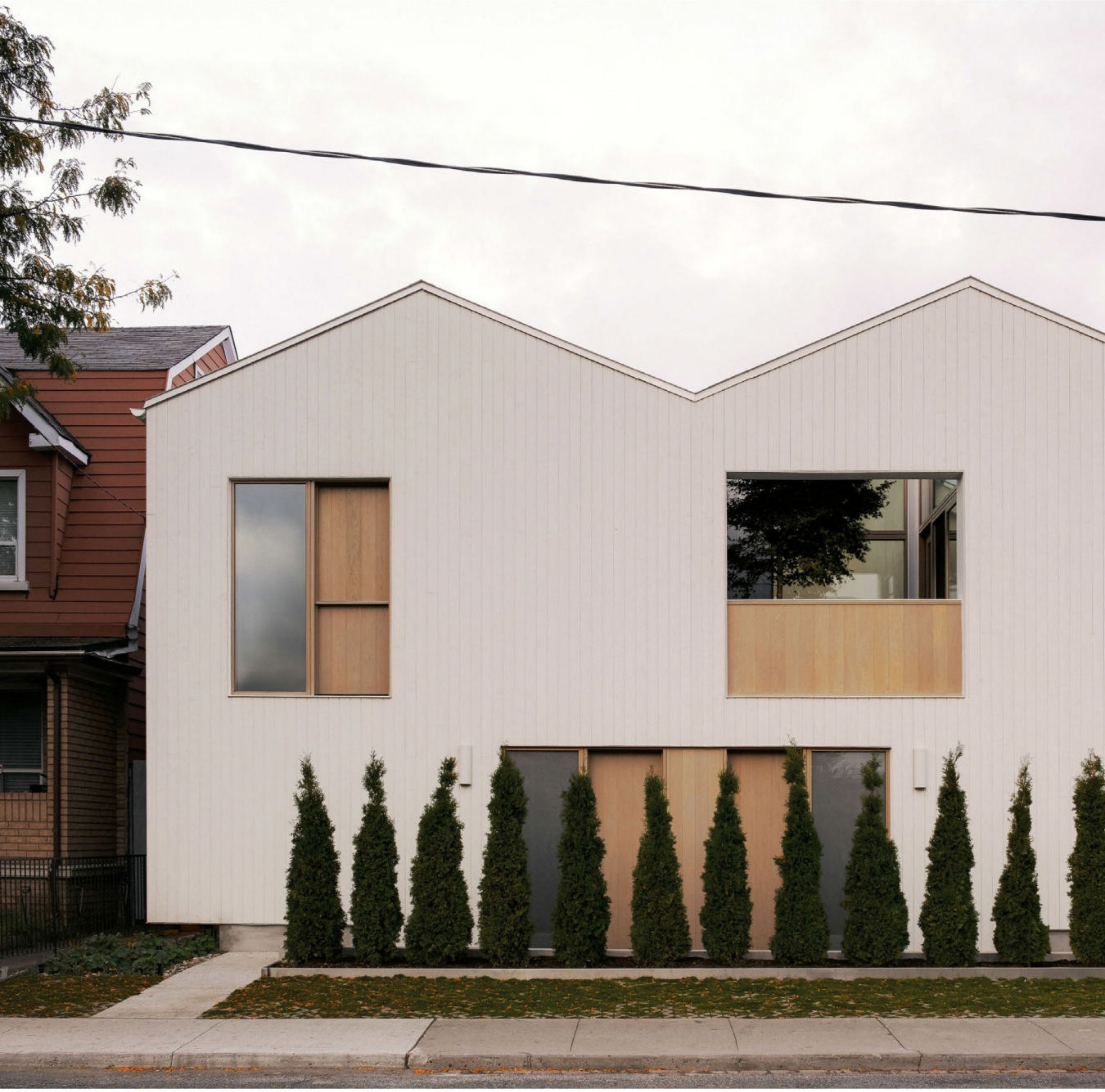
LEFT: With the Inuusirvik Community Wellness Hub, Lateral Office worked with the elements – namely snow, which gathers on its balcony scoops – to insulate the building in winter. Inside (above), the building is serene and welcoming.

turned out to be a viable choice in this hybrid construction; like much of the Arctic, the region around Iqaluit is as dry as a desert. Rainscreen features that would be imperative in the south are useless in the Arctic. Instead, the design team had to configure the piles and massing in such a way that snow wouldn't gather along the walls. Overall, the high-powered passive-design approach helps to ensure the building stays in shape long after the architects leave town. Six years after its construction, it looks and feels like new.

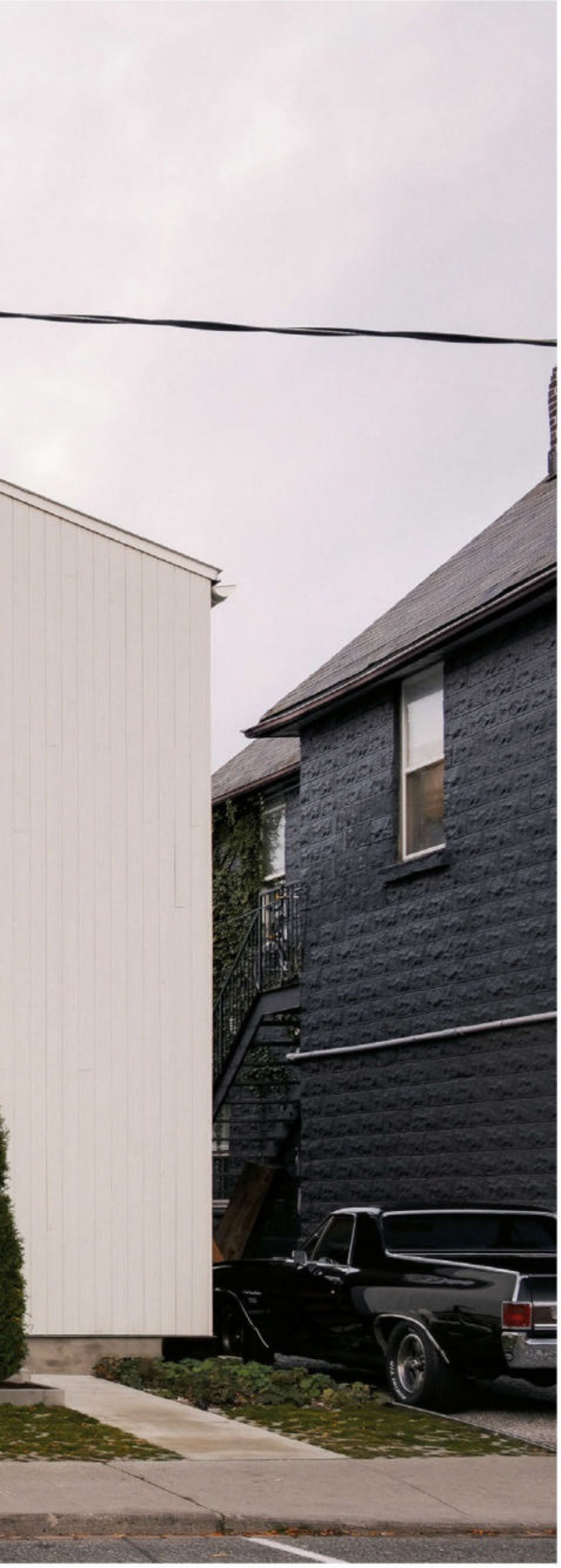
The greatest testament to the power of good architecture is the stroll from the addition into the original building: Both physically and mentally, my comfort level plunged from high to low as I entered the dim, prison-like corridor of the older structure. "Is that the form you want for your education — a long corridor where people are isolated?" asks Stephen Teeple, rhetorically, "or a more social setting, focused on food, that brings people together?"

As the stakes grow higher for maintaining physically and socially healthy communities along our Northern perimeter, so does the need for regionally appropriate architecture that's built for the long term and informed by the local context. The region's historically traditional construction materials have been bone, skin, stone — and snow. All four materials are highly impractical for contemporary building — or are they? Lateral Office designed the newly completed Wellness Hub with scooped-out spaces on its second floor, which serve as balconies in the summer and capture snow in the winter. The design team hopes that the snow that accumulates on the balcony-scoops will help insulate the building. For now, it's speculation — but it's low-risk experimentation.

"Whenever you can, smart construction means using simple, basic, reparable pieces," says White. "When you cannot, it's smart to use components that can be serviced on a regular basis." Unlike large cities in the south, where trades and repair personnel are usually easy to find, small remote communities rarely have the skilled technicians living nearby to fix ailing building stock. "What we really need are new ways to co-design and collaborate with local people and allow local leaders to lead," White continues. "We can't just say: 'Well, I just designed this fancy new building, so let's crane it in and then wish everyone good luck.'" **AZ**



On the second floor of the north unit, a terrace is carved into the building envelope to support a Japanese maple.



DOUBLE FEATURE

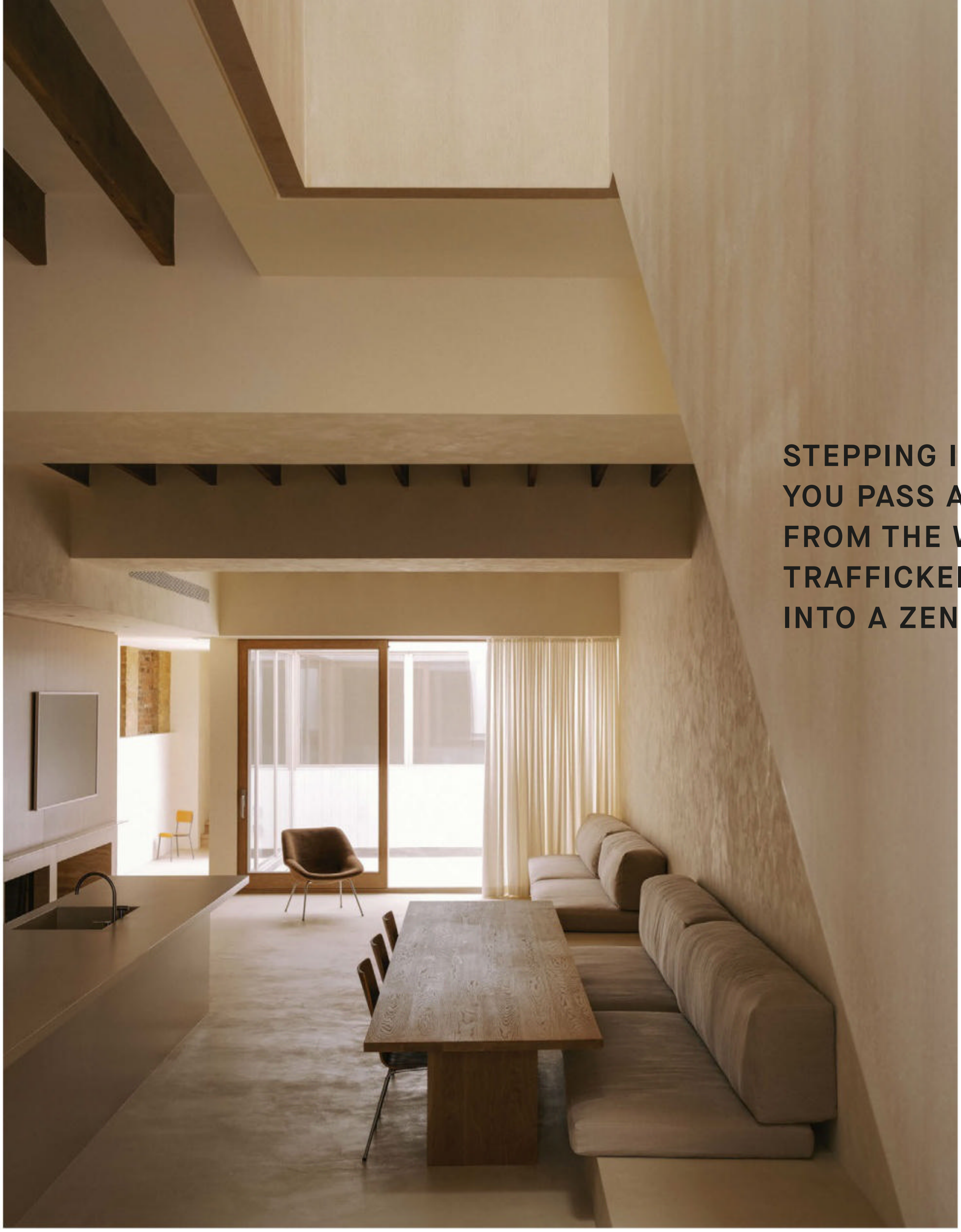
A PITCH-PERFECT, MULTI-GEN SEMI IN TORONTO FITS INTO ITS FOUNDATIONS WHILE RISING ABOVE

BY ELIZABETH PAGLIACOLO
PHOTOGRAPHS BY FÉLIX MICHAUD

On Lansdowne Avenue, a north–south arterial road near the Junction, the building stock is mostly modest two-storey brick builds dating back to the turn of the 20th century. When a semi by local firm StudioAC began to take shape on the street, it stood out dramatically against this typical Toronto backdrop. First, it was a purpose-built multi-generation residence. Then, its form — a minimal flat face and a bold double-gable roof — signalled a modern sensibility. The landscaping around the home mediates its outsized visual presence on the street, but the building still grabs the eye. Its white oak–framed second-storey openings, including a terrace carved into the envelope and planted with a green Japanese maple, captures the imagination.

Stepping inside one of its side-by-side units, which are split north–south, you pass a threshold from the well-trafficked street into a Zen oasis, from the stark off-white wood cladding of the exterior into the caramel centre of the interior. The home's spatial beauty is almost shocking. A few steps down from the marvellous double-height atrium near the entry, the dining and living area unfurls before you in an expanse of neutral shades. The palette is enveloping and tactile: The lime-painted walls, microcement floors and white oak millwork feel touched by human hands. This, as architect Jennifer Kudlats explains, was in service of making natural light — ushered in by skylights above the entrance, where an elegant staircase leads up to the primary bedrooms, and by a deep-set central courtyard — the main material at play. "The lime wash paint allows the light to filter not just through the canopy of the trees, but then also through the brushstrokes of that wash, which is not dissimilar to plaster. You're getting some reflective moments and then some more absorptive moments — a bit of life in the wall."

Kudlats crafted the house with Andrew Hill and the partners' team at StudioAC, a young and energetic

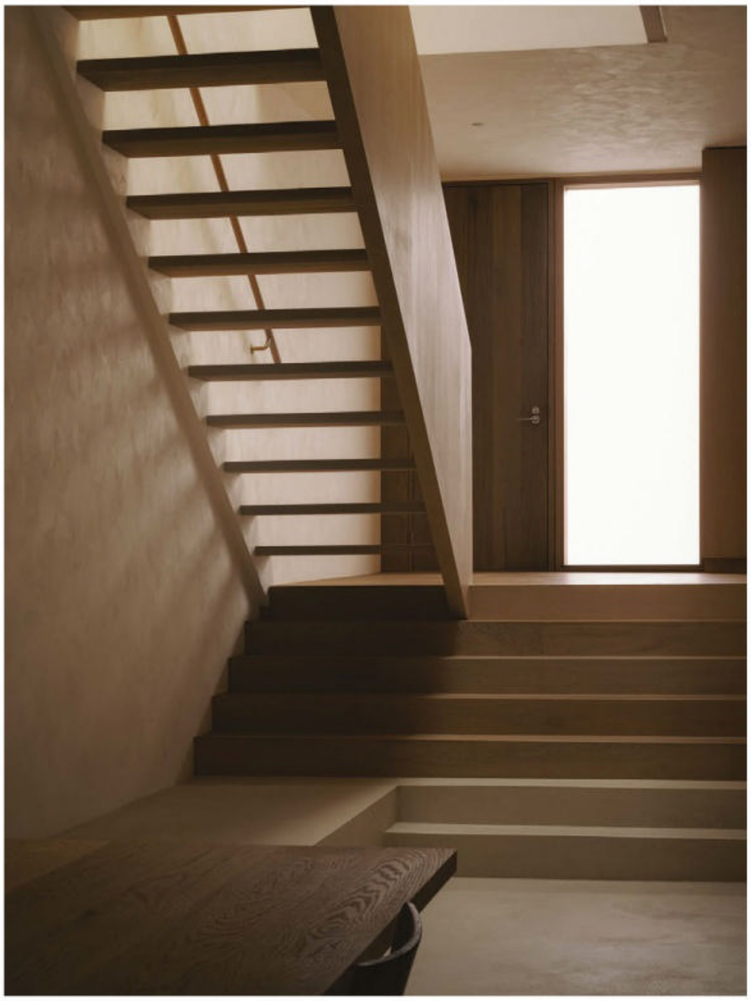


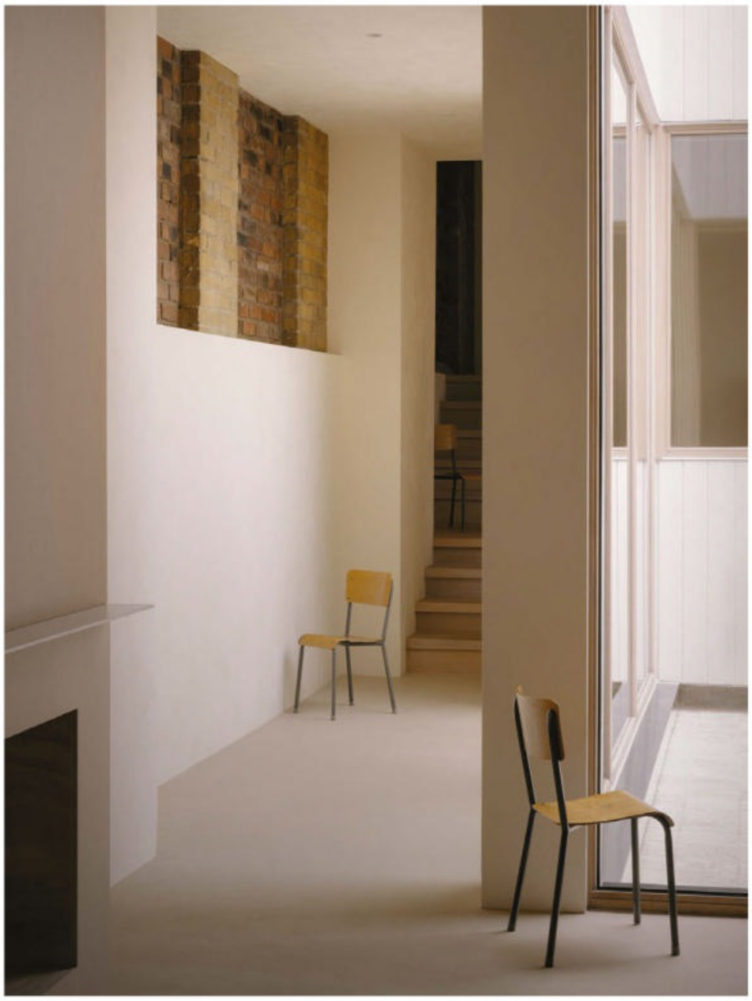
LEFT: Enjoying a view to the courtyard beyond, the living–dining area features lime-painted walls, fabric-upholstered cushions on the built-in bench and microcement floors. The rafters were repurposed from the site's former life as a religious building.

STEPPING INSIDE, YOU PASS A THRESHOLD FROM THE WELL-TRAFFICKED STREET INTO A ZEN OASIS

firm that has built a strong portfolio of residential projects that spans single-family homes and numerous multiplexes going up around Toronto. The semi, whose construction began before rules around multi-units in single-family zones were loosened (and required the architects to overcome more hurdles than would be experienced today) is truly an urban creation. While the firm has envisioned a calm respite from the hectic city for the three generations of the same family that live in the side-by-side units, its sketches from the outset prioritized the double-gabled form that provides the two-sided building its organizing logic while emblematizing its larger urban context. And they could not have found an urban lot with more specificity and eclecticism if they tried.

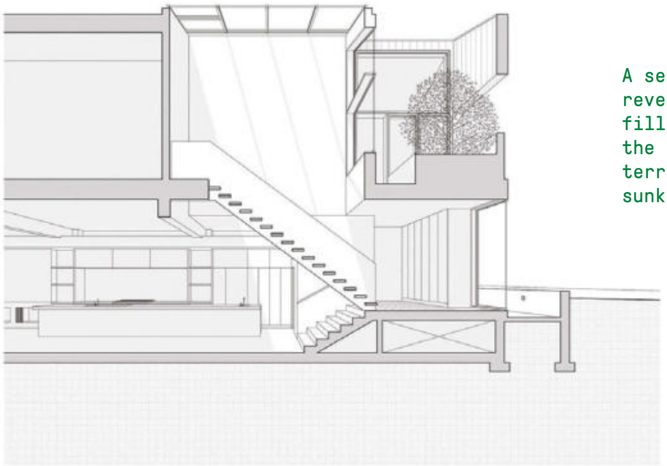
The project was built in the footprint of a low-slung ecclesiastical building whose past lives have included a Gandhi Bhavan and an Anglican Church. The sunken living room derives from the original condition, where the main level was, in fact, a basement. And so, while the home feels like a bold new addition to the setting, it is in fact a work of adaptive re-use. StudioAC retained the foundation and existing walls and have coaxed the building's original details to peek through the new architecture: The rafters have been repurposed throughout the ceilings of the two units, and a datum line of exposed brick is revealed as the main-floor layout corkscrews from the living space to a volume housing secondary bedrooms and flex spaces (with a green terrace) positioned perpendicular to the main house on the opposite end of the courtyard.



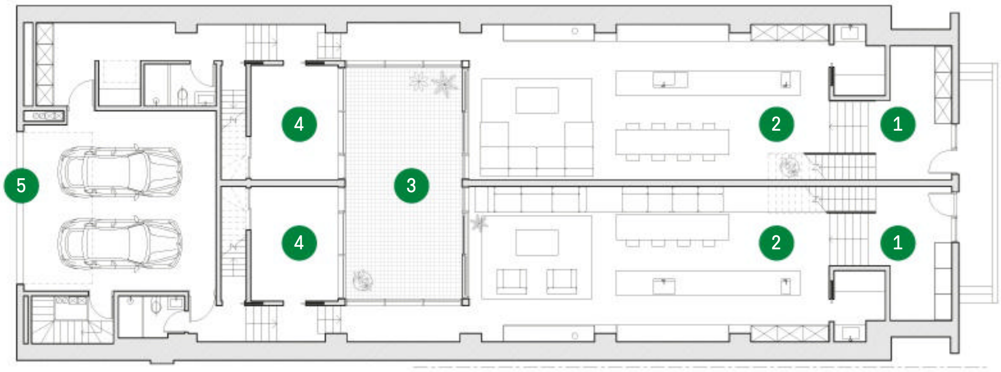


ABOVE: At the entrance, a staircase floats up to the second storey.

ABOVE RIGHT: The brick walls of the original foundations peek through as a datum line in the hallway.



A section drawing reveals the light-filled atrium between the entrance (with terrace above) and the sunken living space.

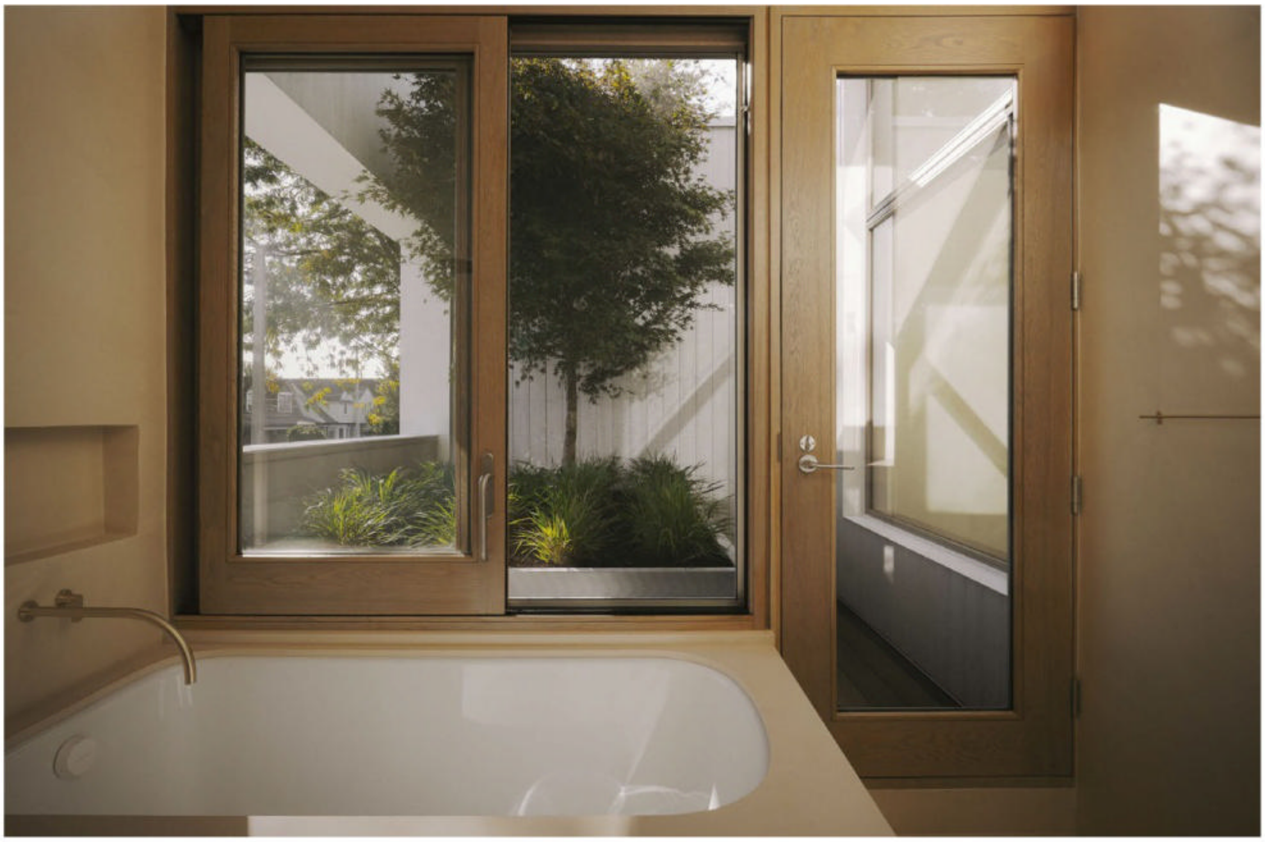


FIRST FLOOR

1. Entrance
2. Living-dining area
3. Courtyard
4. Secondary bedroom / flex spaces
5. Parking

RIGHT: By swinging open a window, the family in the north unit can enjoy a bath *en plein air* — and a view to the breeze-filtering maple. The doors and windows throughout the home were manufactured by Bauhaus.

BELOW: John Pawson's fixtures for Dutch brand Cocoon and other fine details make for a curated experience.



The adaptation began by carving away on "level one," Hill explains. "Placing that courtyard became a real initial move in the project, in terms of how light was going to get in, and then also how this multi-generational relationship was going to evolve throughout the project. So the courtyard was the genesis point." The addition of a second storey, which contains the bedrooms, was like creating a village on top, he says. "Level one is this pancake of existing space, and then level two is this little village where more individuality starts to be expressed."

On the second floor, the architects also delivered on one of the clients' desires: the ability to open a window when they draw a bath and feel the breeze through outdoor foliage. The challenge of achieving that sensation in the middle of a busy city block elicited an imaginative solution: The firm introduced a glassed-in terrace to the building envelope on this upper level and planted the green Japanese maple there. Glimpsed from the street and best experienced from the soaker in the north unit's main bathroom, the tree is a main motif (and even character) in the home. "As one travels through the house and lives in it on a daily basis, moving from the most public to the most private, you culminate in the bathing space, and that's where you're reintroduced to that tree," Hill says. "So that really became the story."

The bathrooms are also where the home's handcrafted finishes — which were chosen to patinate over time — are most striking. While the shroud for the bathtub (which is made of the same Cosmolite composite of recycled granite and mineral grits as the kitchen island) is cut with precision, the shelves recessed into the microcement wall feature softer edges — a touch of the Flintstones in this modern lair. "To me," says Kudlats, "it's constantly that play of opposites, which is so subtle, that just seeps in. The plan of the house is so rigid, mirrored, regimented and specific, and then the details are just softened. It's the idea of the perfectly imperfect." **AZ**

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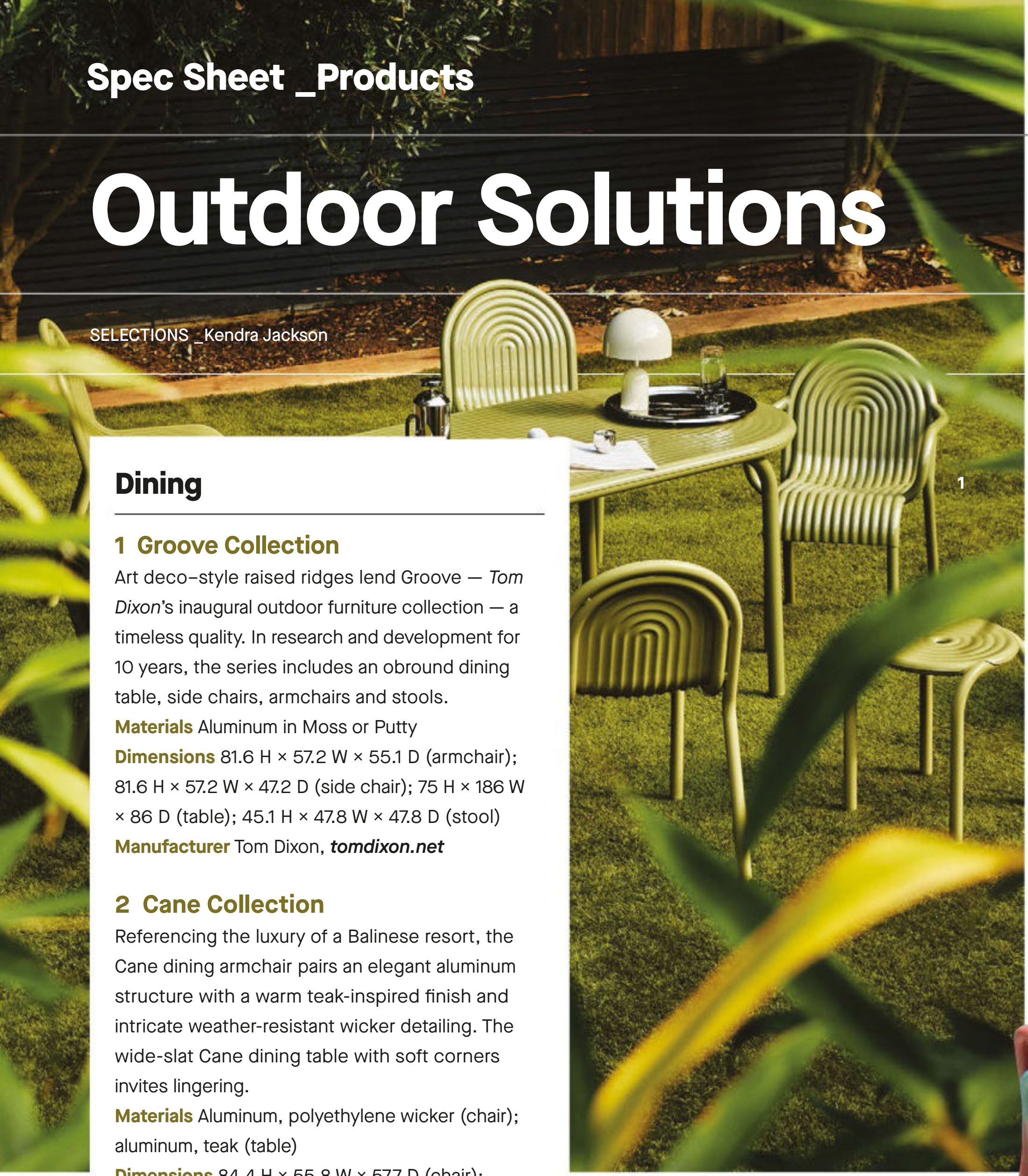

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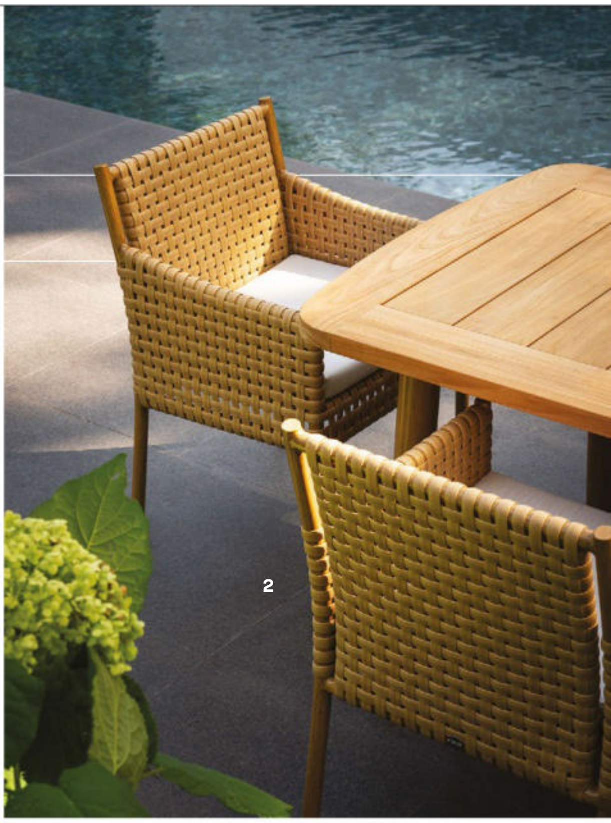

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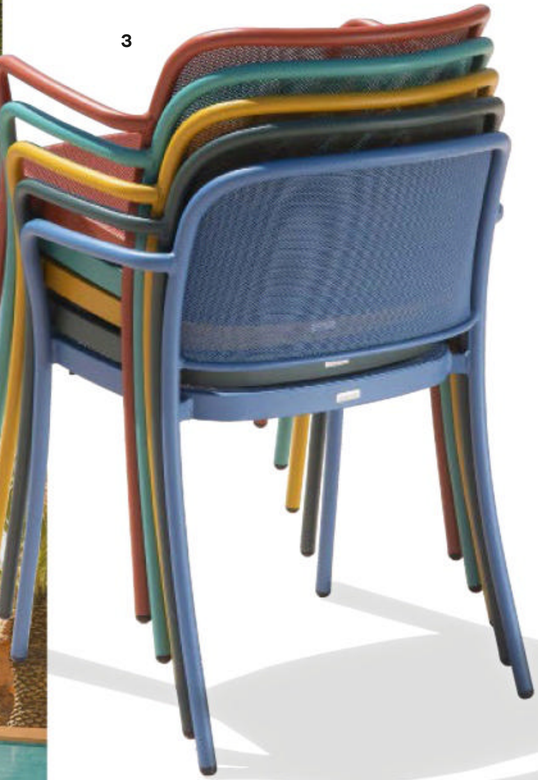

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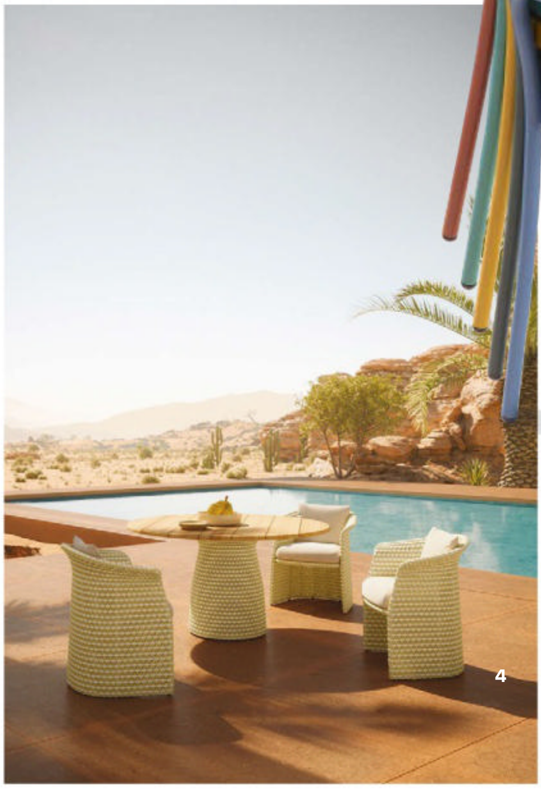

4

Dining

1 Groove Collection

Art deco–style raised ridges lend Groove — *Tom Dixon*'s inaugural outdoor furniture collection — a timeless quality. In research and development for 10 years, the series includes an obround dining table, side chairs, armchairs and stools.

Materials Aluminum in Moss or Putty

Dimensions 81.6 H × 57.2 W × 55.1 D (armchair); 81.6 H × 57.2 W × 47.2 D (side chair); 75 H × 186 W × 86 D (table); 45.1 H × 47.8 W × 47.8 D (stool)

Manufacturer Tom Dixon, ***tomdixon.net***

2 Cane Collection

Referencing the luxury of a Balinese resort, the Cane dining armchair pairs an elegant aluminum structure with a warm teak-inspired finish and intricate weather-resistant wicker detailing. The wide-slat Cane dining table with soft corners invites lingering.

Materials Aluminum, polyethylene wicker (chair); aluminum, teak (table)

Dimensions 84.4 H × 55.8 W × 57.7 D (chair); 76.2 H × 198.1 W × 101.6 D (table)

Manufacturer ARD Outdoor, ***ardoutdoor.com***

3 Café Collection

With a concave seat and curved backrest, the Café seating series by Christophe Pillet is both ergonomic and refined. Suitable for use at home and in high-traffic commercial settings, Café includes chairs (with or without arms) and bar stools that can stack up to eight and four high, respectively.

Materials Steel tube, steel mesh; 16 colours

Dimensions 77.4 H × 59.6 W × 54.6 D (shown)

Manufacturer Emuamericas, ***emuamericas.com***

4 Fllair

Handwoven by master artisans, a tricolour graphic braided weave accentuates the inviting curves of the Fllair dining table and chair, designed by Samuel Wilkinson. Inspired by balmy summer days spent on an island fishing town in Greece, the collection radiates softness and sophistication.

Materials Aluminum, Dedon Fiber, teak

Dimensions 77.5 H × 70 W × 58.5 D (chair); 75 H × 140 W (table)

Manufacturer Dedon, ***dedon.de***

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1

2

Lounging

1 Praline Lounge Chair

Praline's classic hoop form is enhanced by its hardy materials: a woven synthetic rope back, teak-finished aluminum frame and weather-resistant Olefin upholstery. A three-seater sofa and coffee table complete the series.

Materials Aluminum, synthetic rope, Olefin

Dimensions 79 H × 78 W × 82 D

Manufacturer Jardin de Ville, ***jardindeville.com***

2 Pattie Cord Outdoor

Squat and shapely, the Pattie Cord Outdoor lounge armchair features a striking woven cord shell and extra-wide seat cushion. The collection includes an armchair, a dining chair, a sofa and a footstool.

Materials Stainless steel, polypropylene cord, polyurethane foam, multiple fabrics

Dimensions 73 H × 74 W × 97 D

Manufacturer Minotti, ***minotti.com***

3 Sail Collection

The Sail collection of lounge seating is defined by its details: The spinnaker weave back and sides that resemble a billowing sail, handcrafted bezels and bars in five brushed or polished metallic finishes and forged chamfered joints establish the series.

Materials Aluma-Teak, stainless steel, high-performance fabric; multiple finishes and colours

Dimensions 76.2 H × 86.3 or 101.6 W × 91.4 or 106.6 D

Manufacturer Tuuci, ***tuuci.com***

4 Luna Lounge Chair

Designer Ramón Esteve celebrates the revolutionary spirit of icons like Verner Panton and Joe Colombo with his Luna lounge chair, which merges cutting-edge materials with a futuristic form.

Materials Recyclable polyethylene, polyurethane foam, synthetic fibre; multiple colours

Dimensions 71 H × 107 W × 84 D

Manufacturer Vondom, ***vondom.com***

3

4

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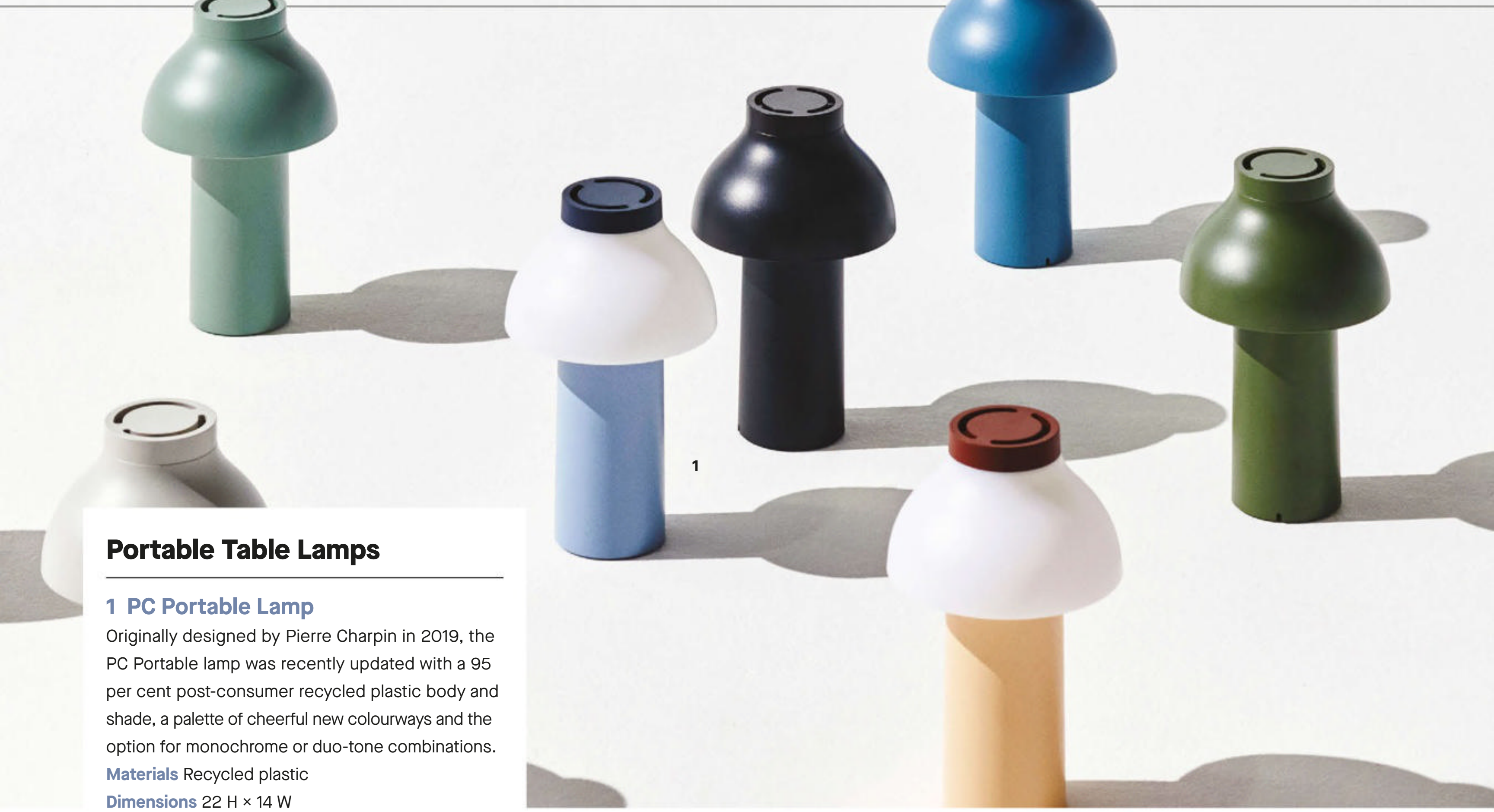


Portable Table Lamps

1 PC Portable Lamp

Originally designed by Pierre Charpin in 2019, the PC Portable lamp was recently updated with a 95 per cent post-consumer recycled plastic body and shade, a palette of cheerful new colourways and the option for monochrome or duo-tone combinations.

Materials Recycled plastic
Dimensions 22 H × 14 W
Manufacturer Hay, ***hay.com***

2 w241 Faro

David Chipperfield's lighthouse-inspired w241 Faro features a dimming wheel and switch, integrated into the top disc, that transitions the light from bright to intimate, while its custom lens delivers glare-free, low-sweeping illumination.

Materials Die-cast aluminum in six colours, including raw; polycarbonate
Dimensions 13.4 H × 15.7 W
Manufacturer Wästberg, ***wastberg.com***

3 Teo

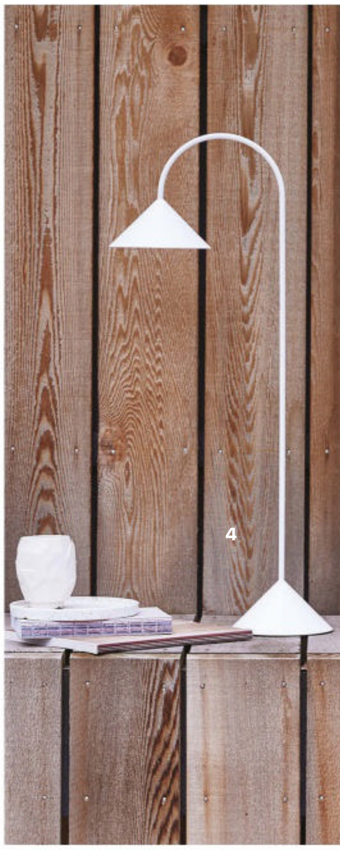
Luca Nichetto was inspired by the work of architect I.M. Pei when devising the Teo table lamp, which is composed of a lightweight roll of Tyvek and a double-layer stone base that features both a USB charger and the dimmable LED source.

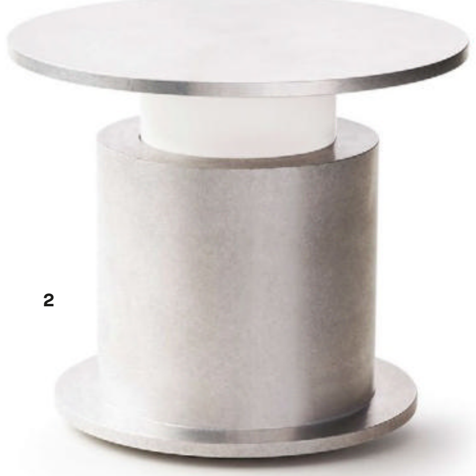
Materials Multiple marbles, Tyvek
Dimensions 29.5 H × 11 W
Manufacturer Salvatori, ***salvatoriofficial.com***

4 Grasp

Influenced by traditional pendants, Danish designer Thomas Albertsen created the all-weather Grasp lamp with a beautifully curved stem anchored at either end by a conical shade and base.

Materials Metal, solid brass; five matte colours
Dimensions 47 H × 30 W and 72 H × 32.5 W
Manufacturer Frandsen, ***frandsen.com***





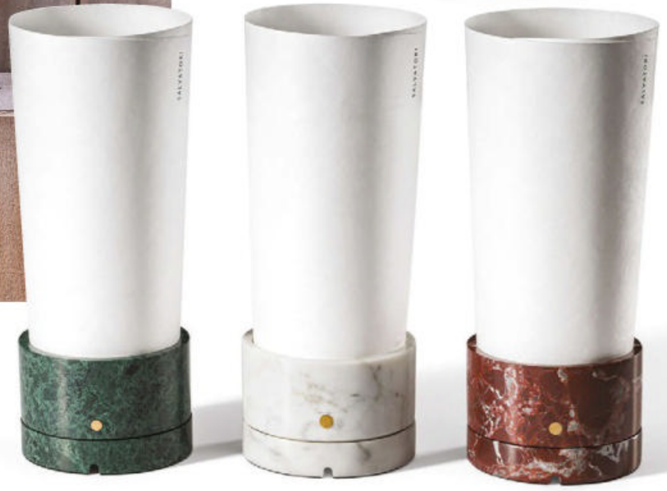
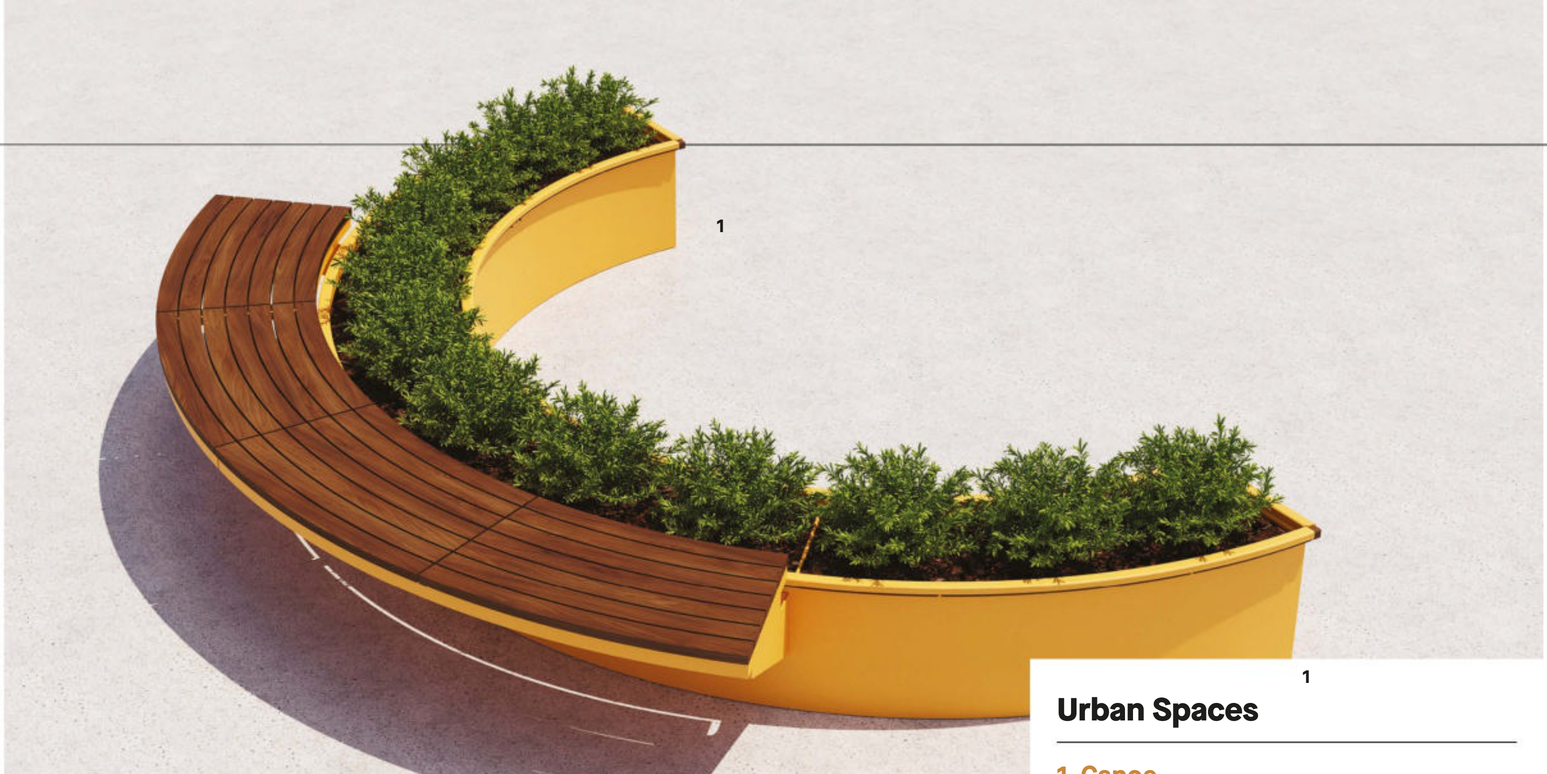


PHOTO BY SIMON MENGES (WÄSTBERG)



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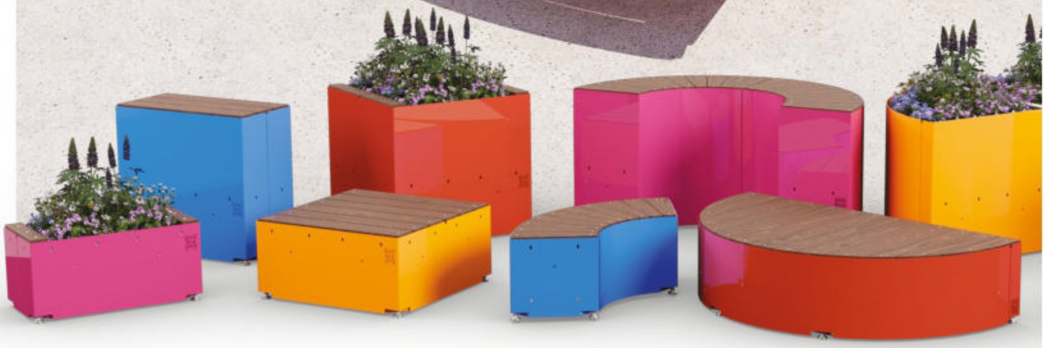

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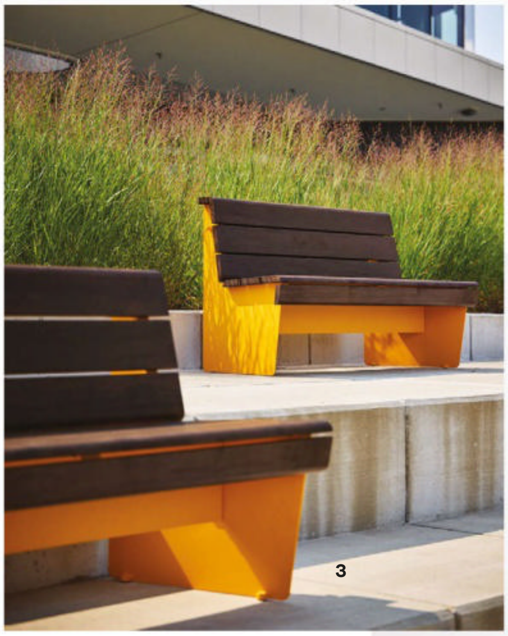

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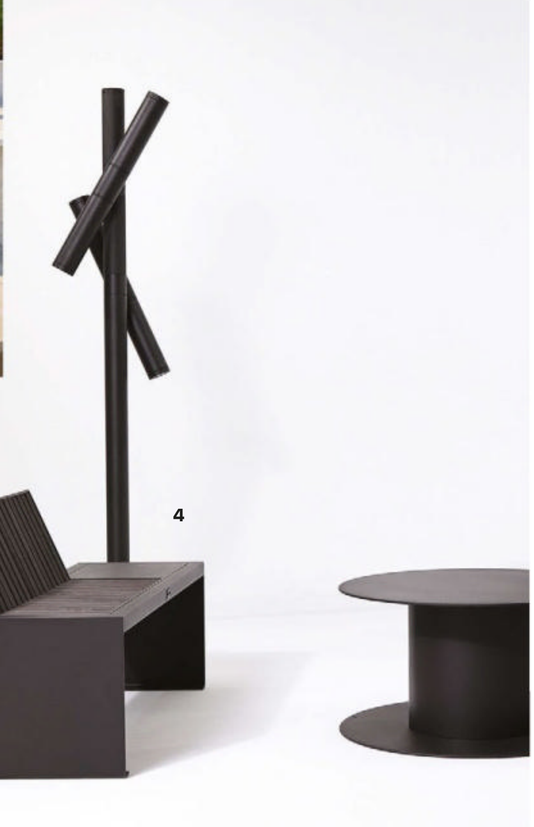

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Urban Spaces

1 Canoe

A modular planter system, Canoe can be integrated with bench seating to create linear, curved or angled (at 30, 45, 60 or 90 degrees) greenery-filled arrangements on streetscapes, rooftops, parks, courtyards and other public settings.

Materials Steel, thermally modified ash, ipê or high-density polyethylene; multiple colours

Manufacturer Maglin Site Furniture, ***maglin.com***

2 Pocket Blocks

A broad series of adaptive benches and planters, Pocket Blocks revitalizes urban spaces into thriving social hubs through creativity and connection. Offered in a range of sizes and shapes, the modular elements are easy to install and reconfigure.

Materials Aluminum in multiple colours, thermally modified ash or oak, ipê

Manufacturer City Blocks, ***cityblocks.io***

3 Booth

A “social design” that aims to bring people together, Booth features two variations: a tall-back and a low-back, both with rounded corners, softened edges and a flared base. The benches can stand alone or be arranged in banquette- or booth-style seating to support a range of conversation settings.

Materials Metal in multiple colours, bamboo, jarrah or thermally modified ash in multiple finishes

Manufacturer Landscape Forms, ***landscapeforms.com***

4 Nebula

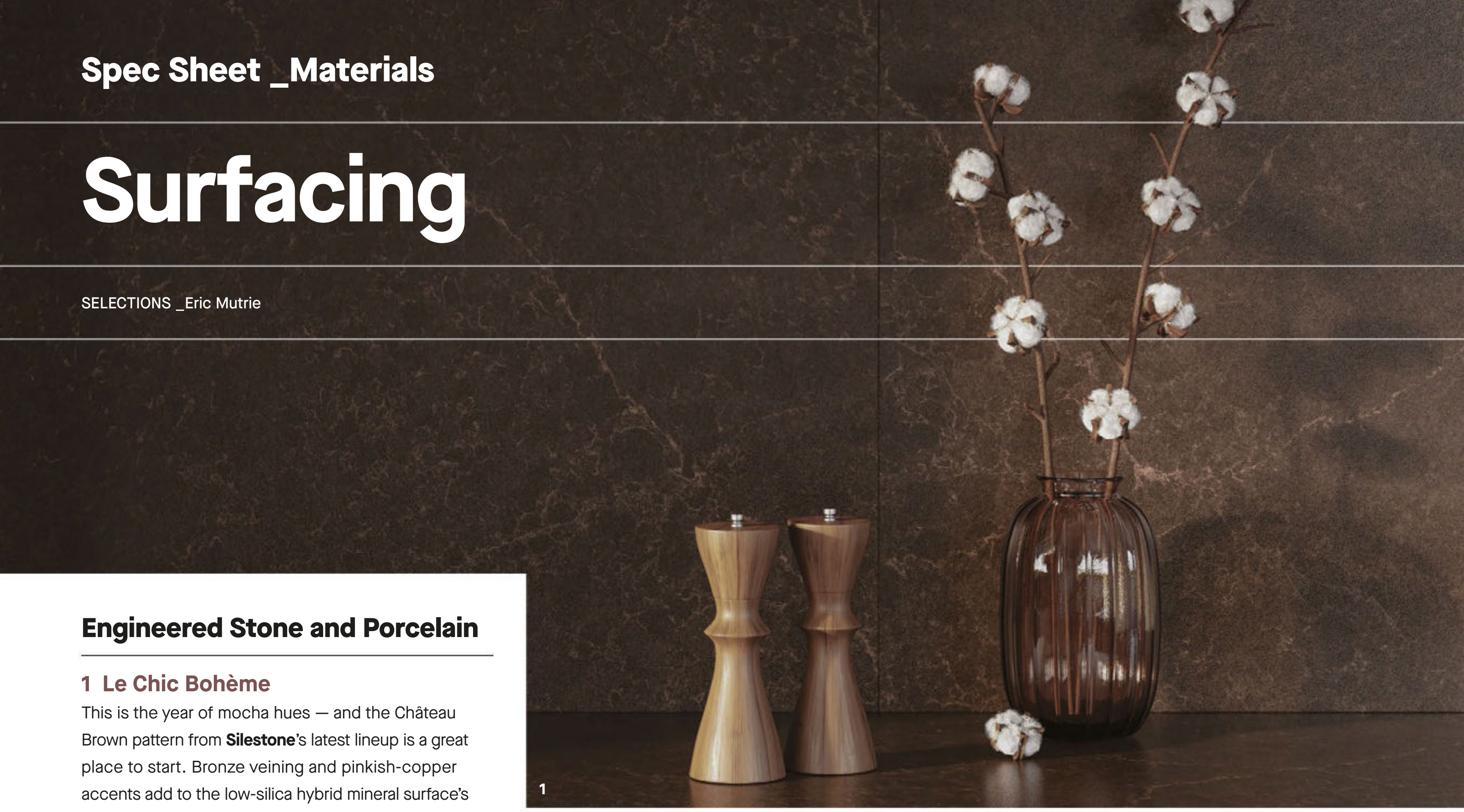
Designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Nebula consists of bench seating, stools, tables, a bike rack, litter bins, planters and lighting with a modern sophistication that introduces human-scaled gathering points to city streetscapes and urban corridors.

Materials Steel in grey or custom colours, 100 per cent recycled wood–plastic composite

Manufacturer Neri, ***neri.biz***

Surfacing

SELECTIONS _Eric Mutrie



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Engineered Stone and Porcelain

1 Le Chic Bohème

This is the year of mocha hues — and the Château Brown pattern from **Silestone**'s latest lineup is a great place to start. Bronze veining and pinkish-copper accents add to the low-silica hybrid mineral surface's depth, while scratch-, stain- and impact-resistance mean it can stand up to dropped coffee mugs, too.

2 Supernatural Ultra

Part of a new expansion to **Caesarstone**'s collection of marble-inspired designs, Calacatta Nectar pairs especially well with warm woods and metals thanks to subtle golden details. Sold with a lifetime warranty, the polished quartz is offered in supersized slabs that measure a lofty 3.3 by 1.6 metres.

3 I Naturali

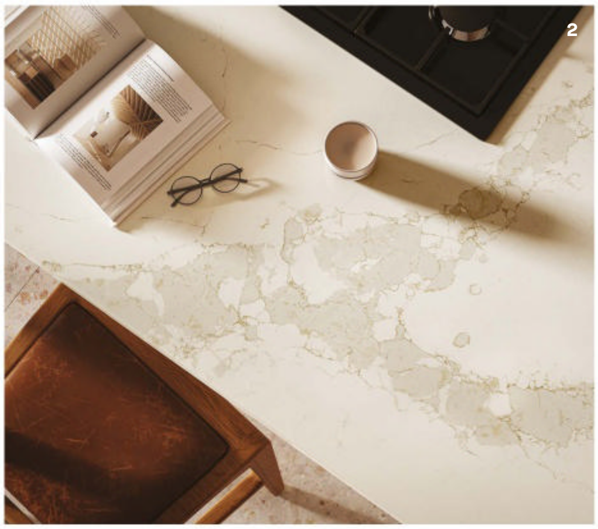
Laminam captures the expressive undertones of some of the most opulent varieties of marble, including mauve-hued Calacatta Viola (featured here). Each pattern in the collection is offered in porcelain slabs measuring 1.2 by 3 metres, and is available in two finishes: polished or natural.

4 Calcis

Italgraniti merges inspiration from two distinct stones, recreating the texture of limestone as a backdrop for veining based on Marfil marble from Spain's Alicante quarries. The resulting porcelain is available in a range of warm tones (including Custard, shown), four sizes and two thicknesses.

5 Beige Stone

Anatolia's collection of sintered stone — available in thicknesses of six, 12 or 20 millimetres — includes a dozen patterns, all featuring a rugged, earthy warmth. Foresta / Block 56, shown here, lays dramatic brown veins against cream-toned channels running through a background of greys and rusty reds.



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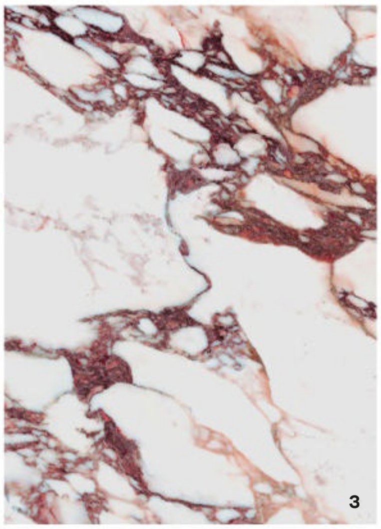

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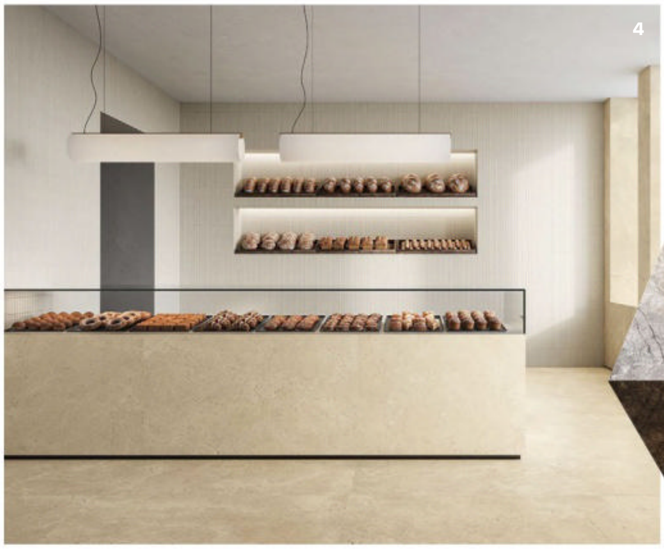

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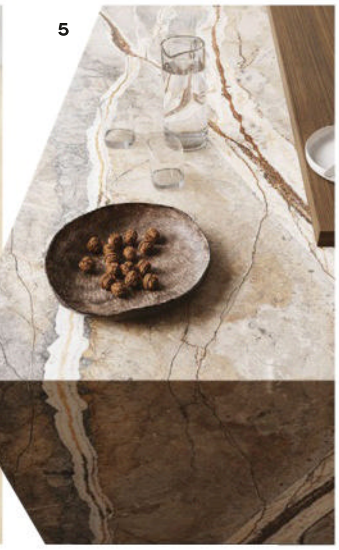

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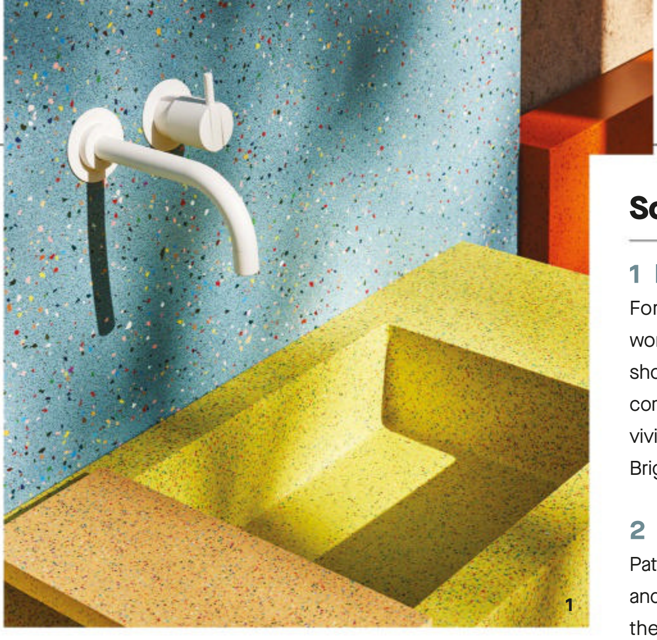
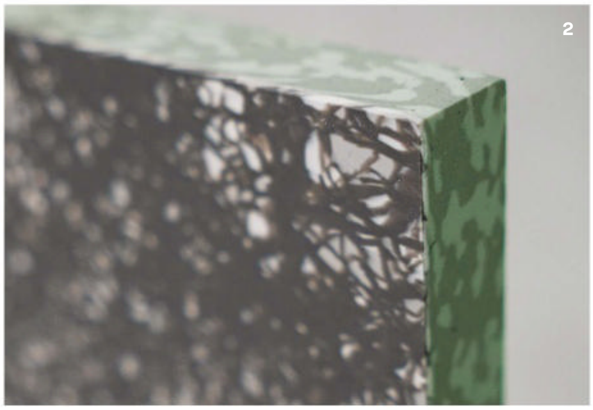




Solid Surfacing

1 Porta dei Colori

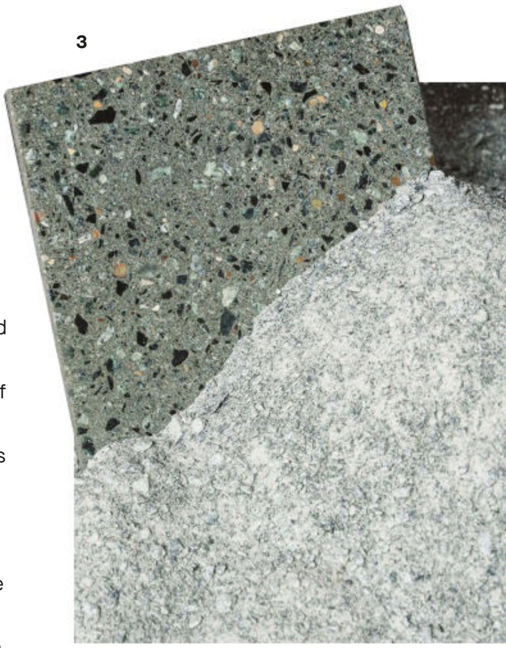
For the 2024 edition of Alcova Milano, **Durat** worked with interior designer Linda Bergroth to showcase creative pairings of its recycled-plastic composite panels. Featured here is an especially vivid juxtaposition of the brand's densely speckled Bright Yellow and Grey-Blue finishes.

2 Growth

Patterns found in nature — including spiderwebs, leaves and treetops covered in a fresh coat of snow — provided the starting point for **Polygood**'s collection designed in collaboration with Gensler. Each panel makes use of a mix of post-consumer and post-industrial plastic waste, including elements recycled from consumer electronics and refrigerators.

3 Custom

Italian manufacturer **70Materia** produces terrazzo-like styles using a base mixture of sand or gravel, cement and water. Its standard lines, Satellite and Fondamenta, can be customized with glass, marble or other salvaged materials for one-of-a-kind effects. Finishes vary depending on the amount of sanding, which can also help to easily remove future scratches.



> **MORE ONLINE**

Find additional surfacing options at ***azuremagazine.com/spec-sheets***

Veneers

1 Living Impressions

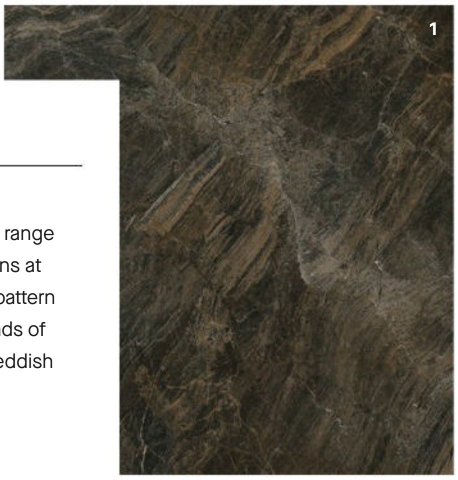
Part of a recent expansion to **Formica**'s 180fx range recreating real metal, marble and wood patterns at full scale in high resolution, this Jatoba Brown pattern mimics a quartzite quarried in Brazil. Large bands of chocolate brown are accented with golden, reddish and cream-toned brushstrokes.

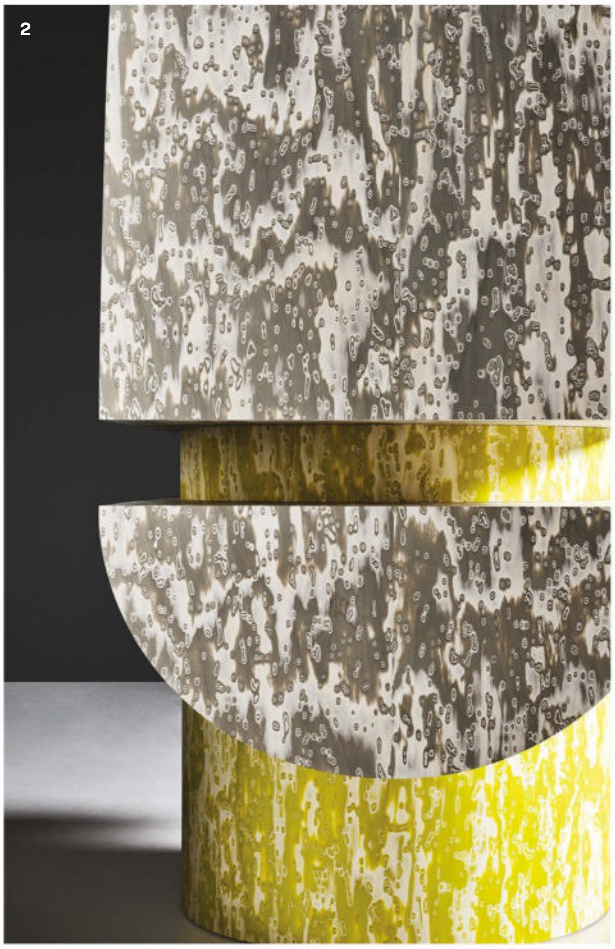
2 Wooclé Yellow

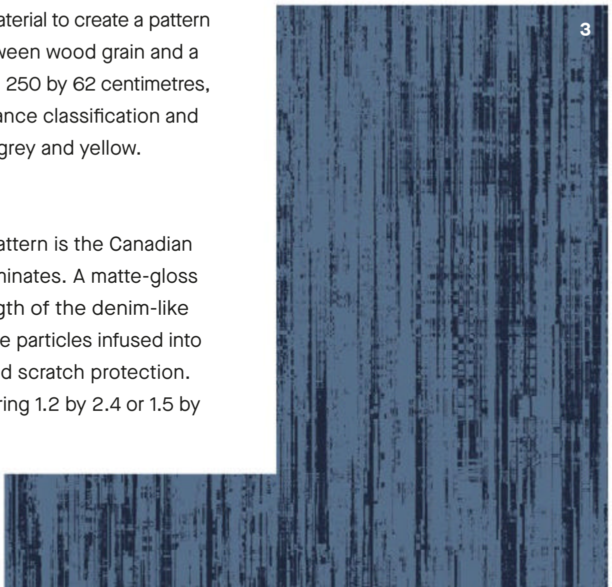
Designed by GamFratesi, this design utilizes **ALPI**'s multilaminar FSC-certified material to create a pattern inspired by the kinship between wood grain and a textile print. Sheets measure 250 by 62 centimetres, boast a BS1D0 flame-resistance classification and are offered in two colours: grey and yellow.

3 Stormy Glaze

Wilsonart's blue-on-blue pattern is the Canadian tuxedo of high-pressure laminates. A matte-gloss texture runs along the length of the denim-like design, while aluminum oxide particles infused into the melamine provide added scratch protection. Choose from sheets measuring 1.2 by 2.4 or 1.5 by 3.7 metres.







Civic Engagement

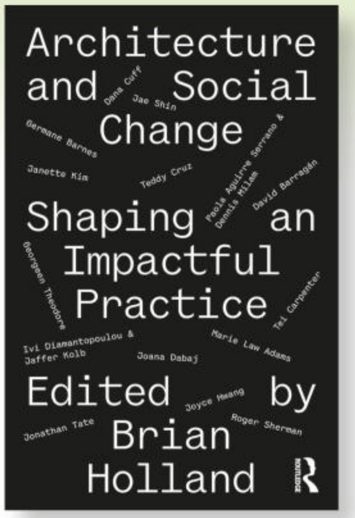
A BOOK, A PODCAST AND A FILM ILLUSTRATE DESIGN'S ROLE IN SPURRING SOCIAL PROGRESS

BY _Sydney Shilling

FILM

Sitting Still

Growing up in Alaska, legendary landscape architect Laurie Olin learned early the importance of shared spaces, especially in impoverished communities. It was there that he began to see and understand the world through drawing. "Out of ordinary things come moments of perception. It's the fact that you get more, and you savour more and learn more if you move a little slower. And drawing really slows you down," he explains in this documentary about his human-centred design approach, directed by Gina Angelone and presented in January at ADFF's Humanity in Architecture event. The democratization of space has become a throughline in Olin's epic body of work, turning parks from "a repository for the people society doesn't want to deal with" into thriving urban hubs. People, he says, are the flowers in the composition of his landscapes. Throughout the film, his contemporaries (among them, Frank Gehry, Billie Tsien and Walter Hood) speak to this social mission: "His work is really about caring for places, and the people who live in these places," Hood explains.



Architecture and Social Change

Shaping an Impactful Practice

Edited by Brian Holland

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Jae Shin
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Joana Dabaj
Marie Law Adams
Joyce Hwang
Jonathan Tate
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BOOK

Architecture and Social Change

In the fall of 2020, Brian Holland taught a course called Activist Practices at the University of Arkansas. In it, he tasked his students with interviewing design leaders tackling the key issues of our time. Those conversations have been compiled and edited to form this book. Germane Barnes, for instance, unpacks how he brings design to disadvantaged communities without displacing culture, while Dana Cuff, director of cityLAB, outlines her work in reshaping California's housing policy. The interviews dive into traditional design work but also illustrate that building a practice that prioritizes public good is a design exercise in and of itself. Holland, however, doesn't view this pursuit solely through rose-coloured glasses. He acknowledges that other advocacy tools are needed — and highlights the harms (intentional or not) that have been done in the name of progress. "It is worth noting that, by definition, any effort at social change can only be understood in relation to the status quo. This is as true for architecture as it is for politics," he writes in his introduction.

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PODCAST

Better Buildings for Humans

What makes a great building? Ask the guests featured on this podcast and you'll receive answers as diverse as the topics it covers — from neuroaesthetics to adaptive re-use. Host Joe Menchefski poses that question at the end of each episode with the goal of inspiring architecture that addresses human comfort, health, energy efficiency and more. While each guest offers important insights, one episode stands out: In "Advocacy through Architecture," architect and activist Pascale Sablan tells the story that led her to start her own advocacy organization, Beyond the Built Environment, which works to celebrate minority groups within the field. Her public work is also at the heart of her design practice as CEO of Adjaye Associates' New York studio. "The process of community engagement must be very tailored and unique, and it also needs to understand that it's starting from a position of repair. There has been harm done by the built environment," she explains. "It's a conversation, not a monologue."

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In the Balance

FOUR YEARS AFTER A HOUSE FIRE, ARTIST DENNIS LIN SUSPENDS MEMORIES OF THE PAST IN MID-AIR

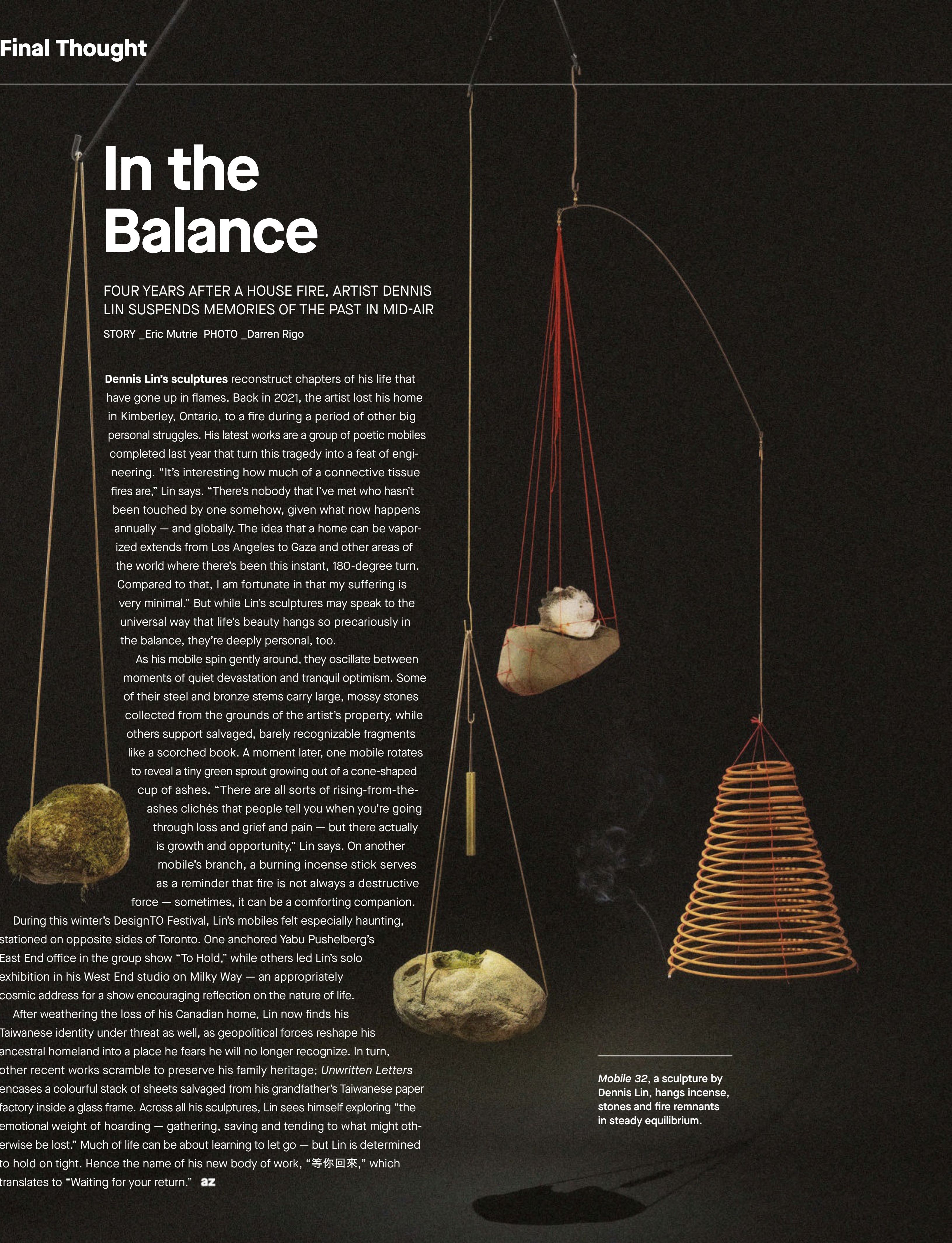
STORY _Eric Mutrie PHOTO _Darren Rigo

Dennis Lin's sculptures reconstruct chapters of his life that have gone up in flames. Back in 2021, the artist lost his home in Kimberley, Ontario, to a fire during a period of other big personal struggles. His latest works are a group of poetic mobiles completed last year that turn this tragedy into a feat of engineering. "It's interesting how much of a connective tissue fires are," Lin says. "There's nobody that I've met who hasn't been touched by one somehow, given what now happens annually — and globally. The idea that a home can be vaporized extends from Los Angeles to Gaza and other areas of the world where there's been this instant, 180-degree turn. Compared to that, I am fortunate in that my suffering is very minimal." But while Lin's sculptures may speak to the universal way that life's beauty hangs so precariously in the balance, they're deeply personal, too.

As his mobile spin gently around, they oscillate between moments of quiet devastation and tranquil optimism. Some of their steel and bronze stems carry large, mossy stones collected from the grounds of the artist's property, while others support salvaged, barely recognizable fragments like a scorched book. A moment later, one mobile rotates to reveal a tiny green sprout growing out of a cone-shaped cup of ashes. "There are all sorts of rising-from-the-ashes clichés that people tell you when you're going through loss and grief and pain — but there actually is growth and opportunity," Lin says. On another mobile's branch, a burning incense stick serves as a reminder that fire is not always a destructive force — sometimes, it can be a comforting companion.

During this winter's DesignTO Festival, Lin's mobiles felt especially haunting, stationed on opposite sides of Toronto. One anchored Yabu Pushelberg's East End office in the group show "To Hold," while others led Lin's solo exhibition in his West End studio on Milky Way — an appropriately cosmic address for a show encouraging reflection on the nature of life.

After weathering the loss of his Canadian home, Lin now finds his Taiwanese identity under threat as well, as geopolitical forces reshape his ancestral homeland into a place he fears he will no longer recognize. In turn, other recent works scramble to preserve his family heritage; *Unwritten Letters* encases a colourful stack of sheets salvaged from his grandfather's Taiwanese paper factory inside a glass frame. Across all his sculptures, Lin sees himself exploring "the emotional weight of hoarding — gathering, saving and tending to what might otherwise be lost." Much of life can be about learning to let go — but Lin is determined to hold on tight. Hence the name of his new body of work, "等你回來," which translates to "Waiting for your return." **az**



Mobile 32, a sculpture by Dennis Lin, hangs incense, stones and fire remnants in steady equilibrium.

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